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IN CAMP AND CANTONMENT  
STORIES OF FOREIGN SERVICE

















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STORIES OF FOREIGN SERVICE





IN CAMP AND OUT OF CAMP

STORIES OF THE GREAT WAR



# IN CAMP AND CANTONMENT

STORIES OF FOREIGN SERVICE

BY

EDITH E. CUTHELL

AUTHOR OF

'ONLY A GUARDROOM DOG,' 'SWEET IRISH EYES,'  
'THE WEE WIDOW'S CRUISE,' ETC.

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## IN CAMP AND CANTONMENT.

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### IN THE CAMP OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

It is the 'club' hour at Guramghur. Outside the thatched bungalow, dignified, in that benighted station, by the name of the 'United Service Club,' have halted the few European vehicles of which Guramghur boasts. The police-officer's old grey Arab, in its venerable buggy, is drawn up opposite the collector's *vagnit* with its pair of screaming country-breds, pheasants' feathers adorning their ears. This formation

enables the grooms, squatting in the dust below the collars of their respective charges, the easier to dilate upon their most recent speculations, and to retail the current gossip both of the bazaar and of their sahibs' establishments. An aroma of cow-dung smoke pervades the atmosphere, announcing the preparation of the native evening meal. It rises from each dog-kennel line of mud servants' houses in each compound. Like a loathly veil its light folds wraps the more loathly river, yellow as pea-soup, creeping stealthily past the club. Over the flat roofs and the tall minarets of the native city of Guramghur, away beyond the European lines, it hangs in a pall, a pillar of cloud. From the canal beyond the club compound exhales a dank, malarious mist. The mosquitoes are ubiquitous and virulently active.

Ashton Gray strolled into the empty reading-room just as the club-bearer flitted noiselessly about, lighting it with four ugly,



brown paraffin lamps, which he hung round the bare white walls, where the white ants had traced geometrical patterns in mud, and the fish-insects ran races. Ashton Gray cursed the bearer for letting the lamps smell, and flinging himself down into a creaking grass-chair draped in dilapidated cretonne, idly took up an English newspaper three good weeks old. The telegrams had taken all the cream off the news ; moreover, in merry England it was the silly season. But Ashton Gray was weary of the smoking-room, where the soda-water corks popped intermittently, sick of the eternal 'bucking' of the dusky policeman, who had shot yet another deer yesterday, nauseated with the ceaseless wrangle of the collector and the major. The Guramghur world was a small one. They keep only a detachment of the regiment from Punkahpore there, and, including the civilian ladies, there were but three white women in the place. But the



policeman's wife was as whitey-brown as himself, and so, perhaps, hardly counted. The assistant magistrate's *burra-mun* had just had yet another baby, fated, probably, like most of the others, to people the little cemetery by the Mall, high walled for fear of jackals. So, at this moment, society in Guramghur was represented by the Soiled Dove.

Ashton Gray, languidly turning an ancient *Field*, could hear her talking out on the *chabbuotia*, where, extended in a huge arm-chair, she had collected, in the fast-falling dusk, a little knot of such men as were not imbibing pegs in the smoking-room. Half involuntarily Ashton Gray listened. There had been a time when the sound of that voice was to him the sweetest thing in Asia. But that was two years ago, up at Nynee Tal. Life in India is fleeting, in every sense of the word. Wafted by mysterious breezes blowing



from high headquarters, men flit swiftly and suddenly.

‘ Mary, Mary, quite contrary,  
Where do your subalterns go ?  
For love is brief, and the next relief  
Will scatter them all like snow,’

sings our barrack-room bard.

Right over two-months’ leave in the hills, with its dancing and picnicking, boating and riding, Ashton Gray had been very much in love indeed. Then Kensington Goare had turned up. A well-off major in the Crimson Cuirassiers, with a Lady Somebody of a wife at home, too aristocratic to soldier in India, Kensington Goare consoled himself for her absence. He had quite a reputation as a *bow-wow*, having a pretty taste in presents and a string of nice ponies to lend, if he chose. The Lucknow race-week of the spring before had brought the Soiled Dove and the much-sought-after Cuirassier together. They met again on



the shores of the lover's lake after the rains.

Ashton Gray was naturally the first person whom everyone took special care to inform of the race-week episode, till then unknown to him. Man-like, he did not beat about the bush. He had a row with the Soiled Dove, in a canoe of all places, on the lake in moonlight. She made no denial, for she had none to make. Embittered and maddened, Ashton Gray threw up his leave before it was over, and took the next *tonga* down the hill, expanded suddenly into a full-blown cynic of five-and-twenty.

The girl had been deeply hurt. Not her pride only, but any remnant of her better self had been sacrificed. Ashton Gray was a good fellow, and she had clutched at him as a drowning man grasps at a straw. When he fled, leaving the field open to the major, the inevitable swing of the pendulum ensued. Then followed a brief, but



gorgeous, spell of social notoriety as Kensington Goare's friend. Then he went home with his regiment, withdrawing the light of his countenance from a country which he had always affected to despise, while carefully culling what sweets and extra pay it offered, and the Soiled Dove was glad to marry Tomlinson, a red-haired Irishman in the I.M.D.

Ashton Gray went home, too, on a year's leave. When he returned to his regiment he found it at Punkapore. As the latest from home, he was naturally sent to do duty with the detachment in penal settlement at Guramghur, and there he found the Tomlinsons.

A woman who has passed through the experiences of the Soiled Dove neither forgets nor forgives. Knowing she can expect no mercy, she grants no quarter. What added venom to her hate-turned love was the fact that Ashton Gray returned—engaged.



It was the swing of the pendulum again. A clean, wholesome, little English girl, piquante and feather-brained. No knowledge of evil in her little fluffy-haired head. No knowledge of anything much, in fact. Just the very head to be speedily turned in India, by reasons of its very emptiness, as the point of the weather-arrow is veered by the shifting breeze.

But it was not within human ken for Ashton Gray to foresee this. He was intensely happy, soothed and pacified by Posie Prynne's love.

As he sat now abstractedly staring across the deserted reading-room, out into the darkness, where the grooms were lighting up the carriage lamps, a vision came over him of Posie as he had first seen her, in white skirt and blue ribbon in her sailor-hat, playing tennis on an English lawn, the cool greenness of which was in itself a soothing recollection. There followed another memory that made Ashton Gray's



heart beat with passion, and the blood surge swiftly through his veins. A calm, balmy night in the Indian Ocean; a phosphorescent wake of molten silver following the P. and O. steamer on which Fate had made Posie and him fellow-passengers. Above, an amethyst sky, the Southern Cross lying low on the horizon, and close, oh! how close to him, Posie's curly head. He recalled the wave of her hair about her ear as it brushed his cheek; he could feel again the supple outline of her waist as his arm stole round it; the soft pressure of her yielding lips as she turned up her face and gave him her first kiss.

'My little girl! My little girl!' thought Ashton Gray to himself, smiling vacantly over ancient sporting intelligence, as though he had backed the Leger winner.

Suddenly into this dream broke from without the high-pitched voice of the Soiled Dove.

'I shouldn't think *that* will ever come



off! One of those board-ship engagements, you know!’

Ashton Gray, his ears suddenly sharpened, listened eagerly to the rumble of talk outside on the *chabbuotia*.

Growl, growl, grumble, grumble, grunt, that was the major’s indistinct reply; he spoke without troubling to remove his cigar from between his lips. Somehow or other men never remembered such little niceties in the presence of the Soiled Dove.

‘You bet!’ she laughed again. ‘With one of the boys of the new Horse Battery just come! It’s the talk of Nynee. Why—’ And her voice sank tantalizingly lower.

Then followed a masculine guffaw.

‘By Jove! Don’t say so?’

That was the ‘Stunt Sahib,’ or assistant magistrate, intensely amused over something.



Inside the reading-room, the unseen listener had sprung from his chair, clutching and crumpling the *Pioneer*, and staring into the darkness vacantly.

There followed a deprecating mumble from the cigar-filled lips, and to it responded the shrill voice again.

‘Oh! yes, pretty little thing enough! *Beauté de diable*, and that sort of thing. Not a feature that I can see, though. But young Blagdene’s awfully gone, and I must say that Mrs. Prynne——’

The dirty cretonne purdah, which separated the smoking from the reading-room, was pushed aside, and the canal engineer, encamped for a few days at Guramghur, entered, ponderous and slightly boozy, as he generally became, when the unwonted excitement of the club whiskey alleviated his monotonous and solitary mill-horse round of existence.

‘I say, Gray—that you? Wanted to

tell you 'bout my new tat-nitsh tat, y' know; but not up to my——'

'One minute, Bridges,' gasped Ashton Gray, rivetting eyes that saw nothing on the paper in his hand, and speaking in a voice which sounded to himself as if miles way. 'Just let me finish this article in the *Pi*,' he stammered, trying to gain time to pull himself together.

'No hurry, old man. Got a thirst I wouldn't shell for a fiver. Here! You *kidmutghar*, *peg lao*, and *jaldi*, too'— (Waiter, bring a peg, and quickly, too.)

The purdah descended again upon the broad back, and Gray, once more alone, still stared at the newspaper in his hand. Suddenly his attention was rivetted.

*'From our Nynee Tal Correspondent.'*

'Society in our cloud-cuckoo-land has woke up considerably since the monsoon abated. The ball or balls are emphati-



cally rolling, in every sense of the word. At Thursday Gymkhana, Mr. Blagdene, R.H.A.'s grey pony "Nosegay" nominated by Miss Prynne, won the "Ladies' Bracelet." "

The words seemed to Ashton Gray to stand out in double-leaded type. Mechanically he ran his eye down the column of gossip.

' Tennis tournament. Lady's and gentleman's doubles. Miss Prynne and Mr. Blagdene, third heat . . . . Lady Tiptop gave a most enjoyable fancy-dress ball. . . . a poudre quadrille. Miss Prynne looked bewitching in white; her partner, Mr. Blagdene, R.H.A., wore a most becoming Louis XIV. Court costume . . .

The letters, to Ashton Gray's bewildered brain, appeared inches tall. He stared at them, half dazed, when suddenly



the elephantine footfall of the canal engineer was heard approaching. Ashton Gray seized his hat and bolted.

Outside, on the steps, he almost ran against the Soiled Dove, about to get into her bamboo cart. Quite inadvertently, of course, startled by this sudden irruption into the darkness, she dropped a novel she was carrying. Ashton had to stoop and pick it up. As she took it from him she touched his hand. She hated him, yet she liked to feel his touch again, if it was only for a brief second. So she smiled at him, a thin smile, and Gray saw her pale chiselled features clearly by the lamps of the bamboo cart.

‘*Thank you, Captain Gray. Good-night!*’ she cried, as she mounted her perch and clicked to the pony. Ashton Gray mechanically raised his hat as she drove off, the *syce* hitching himself into the dangling net beneath the seat.



But, once round the corner into the Mall, the smile faded from the Soiled Dove's lips, and a tired look came into her eyes.

Her bungalow was deserted when she reached it. The bearer met her with a note.

'Don't wait dinner,' scrawled Tomlinson. 'Cholera broken out in jail.'

'No, indeed,' mentally responded his spouse, and she ordered the hovering domestic to *khana lao*.

As she took off her hat she addressed her own reflection in the looking-glass.

'What a hag I look! And if he thinks I'm going to stick in this beastly hole with cholera about! Teddy Browne's up at the "Canning." I'll wire up to him to get me rooms at once.'

It was of that noted hostelry at Nynee Tal—the bachelors' hotel—where women are few and far between, conspicuous neither by their quantity nor quality, that the



local amateur comedian had sung in his topical verses when they got up *Patience* :

‘ A “ Canning ” Hotel young man,  
A kiss and don’t tell young man,  
A take ’em to Morrison’s and feed ’em on bonbons,  
A do himself well young man.’

When, in early morning, as the jackals were slinking back from their night prowls round the butchers’ bazaar, and the *grass-cuts* sallying forth to their toil, the civil surgeon of Guramghur returned to his home after an awful night in the cholera-stricken jail, fagged out, he found it deserted. The bearer informed him that the mem-sahib had ordered a *dâk-gharry* after dinner, and had driven off to the railway at Punkahpore. A note awaited him with the intelligence that his wife had gone up to the hills till such time as the station should be healthier.

The bearer suggested *chota hazari*, or the early breakfast of tea and toast. But Tomlinson called for brandy and soda, and flung



himself into a big chair. The bearer lay down to sleep on the mat in the verandah. When he awoke an hour later, the sunlight was streaming on the dusty Mall, and the bullock-carts were creaking in from the country. The lamp in the drawing-room was smelling atrociously. The sahib lay snoozing in his chair, the empty brandy bottle by his side. The bearer undressed him and put him to bed.

The evening before, when the club had emptied for dinner, the major, in the recesses of his own bungalow, sat in his bath. The regimental barber, holding him by the nose, was shaving him, when Ashton Gray's voice called through the *chick*,

'I say, major, can I have three days?'

It was leave he meant, not imprisonment. But the major understood and stuttered incoherently, the soapsuds in his mouth, and at the risk of having his throat cut:

'Three days? Why, suttently, me



boy! I wish I could say—ten. But we're so infernally short for duty just now. And where are you off to now, eh? Black buck? Snipe ain't in.'

'To the hills,' responded Gray, evasively.

A gurgling muttering followed, intended to express the major's utter incapacity of comprehending how the something something anyone could be such a something something as to go loafing off to the hills where there were quail and black buck, etc., etc., etc. But it was lost upon Ashton Gray, who had departed.

Mrs. Prendergast-Prynne (she was very particular about her hyphen) sat in the drawing-room of her little chalet at Nynee Tal, with one eye on the *durzee* in the verandah, sewing at a ball frock of Posie's held between his toes, and the other on that young person herself, and on a tall, smart-looking young man, in tweed suit and riding boots, who sat on a stool at Posie's feet.



*Posie.* 'Oh, Sam! (I mean Mr. Blagdene) what *does* come next? Let me see—um—ah——'

*Hon. Bertie Blagdene.* 'Something about what on earth shall we do, isn't it? Hark back a bit.' (Seizing her and putting his arm round her waist.) 'Oh, darling Kitty.'

*Posie* (edging away a little). 'Really, Mr. Blagdene, is that necessary at rehearsal?'

'Quite,' began Blagdene, when a figure darkened the doorway, blotting out the beautiful picture of blue sky and green mountain-side framed in the creeper-covered arch of the verandah—a figure booted and spurred and clad in *karki* cotton and big pith hat. It stood a few minutes, transfixed, surveying the scene—the pretty little room all flowers and photos, the fresh, girlish figure in the white frock, the lover-like attitude of the stranger by her side. It was the sort of revelation which



ages men for years in ten seconds. But Posie sprang up with a little cry.

‘Why! It’s Ashton!’

And she ran towards him, and then stopped short, reddening shyly, and looked at her mother.

Mrs. Prendergast-Prynne put on her *pince-nez*. She could see quite well without them, but they helped her to maintain her dignity as a *burra mem-sahib*. She rose slowly.

‘Captain Gray? An unexpected—um—pleasure!’

But he had made for Posie, regardless of the man on the stool behind, who sat surveying them through his eye-glass.

‘Won’t you say how-de-do to me, Posie?’

She held out one hand and laid another on his arm. Her touch thrilled him, but his head was in a whirl. What had he not seen? Posie reddened again, and then indicated the other.



‘Ashton, do you know Mr. Blagdene?’

The two men nodded at each other. The gunner rose.

‘I must be going, Mrs. Prynne. I’ve the scenery to see about, and our full rehearsal at five. You’ll be in good time, Miss Prynne?’

He looked at Posie, and she looked at Ashton. The mother intervened.

‘Yes, Mr. Blagdene, I’ll see this naughty child’s not late again,’ she rejoined, beaming on him.

‘*Au revoir* then, Mrs. Kitty,’ laughed Blagdene, with an assumption of proprietorship which incensed Gray.

‘What does this mean, Posie?’ demanded the latter sternly, when Blagdene had vanished and was heard shouting for his pony.

‘Oh! theatricals!’ cried Posie, sparkling. ‘“Cut off with a Shilling.” I’m Kitty and he’s Sam. Why, what’s the matter, Ashton?’



‘And this, then?’ he demanded, glaring at the sofa and the stool.

‘We were just running over our part! Oh, Ashton!—you never thought——’

But for an answer he caught her in his arms, and kissed her, smothering her happy laugh.

‘Are you up for long, Captain Gray?’ asked Mrs. Prendergast-Prynne icily, as she contemplated her son-in-law that was to be with some severity.

‘I’ve only got three days!’

‘Ah, then you return the day after to-morrow!’

‘Oh! Ashton!’—a little wail from Posie, which constrained him to kiss her again.

‘Sorry we’ve finished lunch,’ remarked the hostess. ‘Where are you putting up?’

‘I’ve come straight up the hill after breakfast at Raneebagh.’

‘So it would appear,’ witheringly.

‘Excuse my clothes, Mrs. Prynne. I couldn’t wait to change. My time’s so short,

you know. I say, Posie, it's quite cool now, and so splendid up here, I'll raise a pony. Come for a ride?' and he turned, weary with the sun-baked plains, to the sweet blue eyes.

'Impossible, I fear,' snapped Mrs Prynne. 'This rehearsal at five!'

'Oh! bother! Let it slide, Posie?'

She hesitated a moment, glancing at her mother

'Oh! I couldn't, Ashton. It's our last! But come down and see it.'

'No, thank you. I think I've seen enough!'

It was Ashton who snapped now.

'Well, then, there's a dance to-night!' and Posie laid her hand on his arm and looked up at him.

'All right. I'll come and escort you and Mrs. Prynne to it.'

'So sorry. But Posie forgets. We dine with the Mactavishes and go with them.'

'We'll meet at the Rooms then——'



‘And now, if you’ll excuse Posie, the *durzee* is waiting to fit her. It’s most important,’ broke in Mrs. Prynne again.

‘Who’s that Blagdene fellow?’ asked Ashton Gray, kicking the stool before alluded to, as he passed it on his way out.

‘He’s in the gunners—acts so——’

‘Can’t stand gunners!’ growled Gray. ‘One of those play-acting chaps!’ he added, and then tried to say yet another good-bye to Posie in the verandah, but the *durzee* intervened, and he had to go.

Ashton Gray betook himself to the club. He tubbed and bathed, and then did a very unwise thing. Attracted by a loadstone he was unable to resist, he sauntered down to the amateur stage at the Assembly Rooms, where he found ‘Cut off with a Shilling’ in full swing. And it made him just mad. As Posie had implied, Blagdene acted well—a great deal too well, Gray thought.

He told Johnson as much, Johnson



whom he had found at the club, and who had loafed down with him. Unaware of the thin ice on which he was skating, as they stood in the half-open doorway, Johnson took his cigar out of his mouth and waved it towards the stage on which Sam and Kitty Gaythorne were repeating the part so diligently practised previously.

‘Not much acting in that, old man! Poor Blaggy’s “landed,” you bet. Another good man gone wrong!’ and Johnson sighed deeply.

Other furtive spectators came up behind them, and a high-pitched voice began:

‘*Dear Mrs. Prynne!* Surely it is time to congratulate you! Such a *nice* match, too!’

There was no mistaking the note of the Soiled Dove. Gray writhed, and Mrs. Prynne gave a little complacent giggle, but denied nothing.

Afraid of meeting either, too angry to give another look at the pair on the stage,



Ashton Gray hurled himself out of the opposite door, and stalked back to the club, where he played poker with Johnson and lost his money.

Ten o'clock drew near. From all the precipitous, rhododendron-clad heights where the bungalows perch above the lover's lake, twinkling lanterns, borne by trotting jampannees, converged on to the Assembly Rooms on the shore. In the shadow of the portico lurked Ashton Gray, determined on securing Posie the moment she arrived, of boldly appropriating her before all the Nynee world. There should be no more misunderstanding, he swore to himself in his rage; that Blagdene fellow should be ousted from the place he had usurped.

Up trotted the jampannees, and one after another plumped their burdens down under the portico. From under a white mackintosh hood of her dandy appeared Posie's fair head. But, ere Ashton Gray could



rush forward to assist her out, a man, who had been riding by her side, swung himself from his pony, and got in his way. Blagdene had been dining at the Mactavishes' too. They emerged into the ball-room by another door than that at which Ashton, fretting in his eagerness, was waiting, and when the latter entered the room, he saw Posie whirling round in Blagdene's arms.

Pushing through the crowd of dancers, Ashton Gray made several attempts to reach the couple. But the gunner seemed to take a fiendish delight in whisking off his partner just as his rival approached.

It was not till the interval that Ashton Gray tracked the pair down, in the dim verandah, sacred to sitting out.

‘At last!’ he said. ‘And what dances are you going to give me, Posie?’

She looked up, half frightened.

‘You are so late.’

‘Hardly anything left,’ he muttered, scanning her card. ‘Is this fair, Posie?’



‘ I—I didn’t know you would be here !’

‘ And these initials—such a lot of them—one in every three, at least ?’

‘ Upon my word, Miss Prynne,’ sneered Blagdene, ‘ I wouldn’t gratify such unjustifiable curiosity if I were you !’

‘ I’ve taken what’s left,’ remarked Ashton Gray, in a white heat of exasperation. (‘ I’ll thank you, Blagdene, not to interfere in what does not concern you. ) And we’ll go down to supper, Posie ?’

The intervals between his dances with Posie,—few and far between, for Blagdene had been first in the field and greedy,—Ashton Gray spent in leaning against a door-post, devouring Posie’s golden-headed, white-frocked, revolving figure with his weary eyes. The man was fagged out, body and nerves, too.

Blagdene of the Horse Gunners was quite the ‘ show ’ man of that season at Nynee. Posie Prynne would have been less than human had she not enjoyed binding him to



her chariot wheels that night. Moreover, Ashton Gray was so cross and excited that she was almost afraid to sit out with him, in the dim corners so plentifully provided for the purpose by the ball committee. At last he insisted on carrying her off to a nook in the verandah. The moon was flooding the lake at their feet, and it lit up Ashton Gray's pale weary face.

'Posie,' he began, his head sinking on his breast, 'you're making me miserable!'

'Oh, Ashton! Ashton! Don't say that!' There was a wealth of tears in her voice which went to his heart. 'But I'm sure I don't mean to, and it isn't true!' she added, with the peevishness of a weak creature afraid to own itself wrong.

'You—you're behaving abominably! You're goading me to madness! You don't care a rap for what I suffer!'

'And you're horribly unkind and cruel to say such things to me!' she cried. The tears lay very near the surface, and her



eyes filled, though he could not see it, as she added : ' I don't know what I've done that you should be so disagreeable !'

' Not know what you've done ? You're a heartless flirt, you are !'

' You've no right to call me names, Ashton—and—and I wish you hadn't come up at all if you're going on like this, all about nothing at all !'

' Nothing at all !' he snorted.

' And I shall just do what I like, as you're horrid—I won't stand—' she stopped short, for she could not control her voice any more.

The moon had gone behind a cloud, the lake lay inky, the verandah in gloom. Ashton Gray could not see the tears half of anger, half of sorrow, which came welling up into her sweet eyes. It was only for a few seconds. When the moon emerged again it revealed the tall figure of Blagdene approaching

' I think this is *our* dance, Miss Prynne !'



She rose up and went off with him without a word.

‘Your friend seems none too amiable. What’s he in?’ asked the Gunner.

‘The 200th N.I.’ murmured poor Posie, deprecatingly.

‘Oh!’ replied the other, with a world of meaning. ‘Shocking poor form these black infantry fellows! Shall we have another turn?’

At the end of that waltz there was a slight pause. Then the band struck up ‘The Roast Beef of Old England,’ and a solemn procession, two and two, in due order of precedence, began to move towards that square sit-down meal which is such a feature of an Indian ball. Ashton Gray hurried up.

‘This is supper. Come along, Posie!’

‘Excuse me, but Miss Prynne has all the supper extras with me, and this is the first,’ interposed Blagdene, with a calm smile of triumph which finished goading



Ashton Gray into temporary insanity.

‘Damn you!’ he hissed.

Mrs. Prynne, who had actually abrogated her rights to go down to supper among the ‘seniorest’ ladies, in order to keep a severe *pince-nez* eye on the doings of Ashton Gray, now descended upon the group, majestic and awe-inspiring, escorted by no less a person than Mr. Justice Dockett of the High Court himself.

‘Really, Captain Gray, I must inform you that my daughter is not used to associate with gentlemen who use bad language before ladies. Mr. Blagdene, will you kindly take her down to supper, and when you bring her back to me, I will take her home.’

‘But, Posie!’ cried Ashton in despair, trying to bar the passage.

Posie tilted her little head with all the dignity of four foot eight.

‘You’re not nice at all, and very stupid!’ and she passed on.



Ashton Gray went back to the club. Johnson and other non-dancing spirits were sitting up making a night of it over bacarat. Gray was about to plunge in with them when he was handed a telegram which had arrived during his absence. It was from the major, at Guramghur, and ran :

*' Moving into cholera camp. All leave cancelled. Return at once.'*

Next morning, when the early birds of Nynee Tal were enjoying their morning ride or walk on the willow-fringed Mall round the shore of the lake, a cotton-clad man in white helmet bestriding a bazaar *tat*, left the club, unmistakably plains-bound.

As he passed under the balcony of the Canning Hotel, a dressing-gowned woman peeped down at him.

*' Returning quicker than you came, eh ?'* sniggered the Soiled Dove, as she went on



with her *chota hazari*, which she and Major Teddy Browne, the occupant of the next room to hers, were partaking of together, as was their wont, in the balcony.

At the end of the lake, where the zig-zags begin to descend fully two thousand feet into the valley below, two riders, cantering round the Mall, passed Ashton Gray very swiftly. They were Blagdene and Posie Prynne.

Her colour heightened. She would have stopped, only her pony was pulling so after Blagdene's, which was a stride in front. The next minute, and it was too late.

Ashton Gray was hardly a man much given to prayer. But no more fervent ejaculation was ever uttered than the 'God bless you, Posie!' which rose to his lips, while, for a second or two, mountain, lake, valley, and the far-shimmering plain were blurred in a sudden mist.

Ashton Gray found his regiment under canvas on the outskirts of the first camp-



ing-ground some ten miles outside Guramghur, a square rectangular mango *tope*, Government planted. Ostracised and quarantined, they were denied the grateful shade, and condemned to the bare sunburnt plain outside.

‘Sorry to recall you, me boy,’ was the major’s cheery greeting. ‘But obliged to, ye know. You look as if a bit more hills would have done you no harm. Off your smoke? Bad sign!’

The cholera was raging in the native city of Guramghur, and the wing of the regiment quartered in cantonments there had left a dozen cases behind it and four newly-made graves. The air was heavy and stagnant with the damp malarious heat, which follows the monsoon. It was too damp for punkahs ; too hot for cold-weather clothes and habits. The four officers and the doctor sat down to a gloomy little meal at a camp-table set up in the open for the sake of air. Ashton Gray, worn out with



his hurried journey and with all he had gone through, made a pretence at dining, chiefly as an example to the two subalterns, mere boys going through their first cholera experience, and who, thoroughly scared, were pinning their faith on brandy. The major and the doctor did all the talking, and Gray was thankful when he was allowed to turn in.

He sat a long time at his tent door staring into the inky blackness of the mango grove. Outside, the moon, just as it had lit up the Nynee lake twenty-four hours previously, now flooded the open plain with an unearthly haze. A pariah dog in the nearest village bayed at it, an owl hooted among the mango-trees, and once, a coterie of jackals imported temporary Pandemonium into the dusky silence, by holding a concert over an old Mahomedan tomb in one corner of the grove.

Ashton Gray felt disinclined for rest.



He was sore at heart, cruelly lacerated. He sat long, going over everything again and again. This is always the first stage of a great grief. Is it Nature's preliminary attempt at cure, this scarifying the wound that it may heal eventually the more soundly?

The doctor, going his rounds, looked in. Things were bad. There was another case or two in the hospital tent pitched yonder, apart. They would have to march again in the morning.

From a restless sleep Ashton Gray was awoke in the small hours by the groans of his bearer, who slept, after the manner of his kind, under the *konaut* of his master's tent. The old man was writhing in agony and calling upon some of his million gods. Ashton Gray got up and dragged him into the tent, putting his own flask to his blue lips, and covering him with one of his own rugs. Then they came and carried him off to the hospital tent. He had been per-



fectly well when he had dressed his master for dinner.

At daybreak, *reveillé* sounded. Within an hour the tents fell to the sound of a bugle note, and the troops were again on the march. Flight, instant flight, is the soldier's weapon against the cholera fiend. The four companies which composed the wing divided. The major and the two boys marched with two in one direction; Ashton Gray in another with two more. Arrived at the new camp, he dozed the greater part of the afternoon, and then sat down to a solitary meal. He vaguely missed the major's chaff, and the old bearer, who had been attentive, if stupid. But he was fast settling down into the gloom of black despair.

Not that he funk'd the disease. Ashton Gray had been out in cholera camp before now. But he simply did not care what happened, what became of him. Nature



was applying her second remedy, the anæsthetic, to the broken heart.

In rummaging, as he went to bed, over his portmanteau, hastily and badly packed by his *syce*, doing bearer, he lit on a little embroidered shaving-tidy, which was wont to adorn his dressing-table in his bungalow. Posie had worked that shaving-tidy for him on board ship. It was the only thing she had ever given him. Mrs. Prendergast-Prynne had taken care of that. Now men do not shave, but are shaved, in India, though Posie, of course, did not know it. So the chamois leather folds had remained immaculate of soap-suds. But Ashton Gray had liked to have it lying about. Now he rescued it, crumpled, from the chaos of the portmanteau, and, there being no dressing-table available, put it under his pillow. Then he slept awhile calmly, undisturbed by the groaning of the sufferer in the next tent.



It was about two o'clock in the morning when they called the apothecary to him. The doctor was with the other detachment, but the Eurasian did what he could, and sat with Gray till *reveillé* sounded at dawn, when the troops were hurried off again, under charge of the *subadar major*.

Ashton Gray's tent was left standing alone, but, by evening, it also had been struck, and there was a new-made grave in the mango grove.

Posie Prynne cried herself nearly ill, and almost ugly. The theatricals had to be put off for quite a week.

## BULLIED BY A BULL.

A TALE OF A 'T. G.'

HE burst upon our astonished vision during the cold weather—we were stationed at Shikarpur—a 'thing of beauty' indeed, though I cannot truthfully aver that he proved 'a joy for ever.' He was a very fair little man—yellow hair, with a wave all over it, blue eyes, a complexion the envy of half the women in the plains, and a downy moustache like a callow duckling. These same women called him 'a dear boy,' but he was older than he looked—in years. But in Wee-vor's case these latter were, apparently, in



no hurry about bringing 'the philosophic mind.' So, in the meantime, *faute de mieux*, he seemed to dispense with the article altogether.

Two causes conduced to Weevor's shedding the rays of his yellow head and of his golden English sovereigns over us 'Scilly Islanders' that winter at Shikarpur. The first cause took the shapes of a devoted mother and a stern guardian, who sent him abroad to travel after he had left Eton, to see the world, to enlarge his horizon. Weevor had not done well at Eton, and his family had hoped great things from a trip round the world. But his bear-leader fell so ill at Agra, that the doctors peremptorily ordered him home, and Weevor, who was very pleased with India, and wished to stay out till the end of the cold weather, took shelter under the guardian wing of Riversden, his cousin and one of our noble selves, 'the Scillies.' Riversden's the best fellow out, good-tem-



pered, cheery, a good sportsman and rider. But his callow little cousin tried him not a few.

For, like most stupid people, Weevor had unlimited faith in his own powers. He thought he could ride, shoot, play billiards, and sing a song after mess. At first, we put up with him civilly enough. The honour of the regiment, always renowned for hospitality, demanded that we should hide our *ennui*, and dissemble how he bored us. So we let him ride our ponies, and knock them about somewhat, for Weevor's temper was none of the best. We allowed him to try and shoot with us, and lost many a good bird in consequence of his misses. We let him down very easy indeed, at first, and behaved quite nicely and sweetly to him.

But the better we treated him the cockier did Weevor become. He possessed the unlimited conceit of a shallow nature. He gave us no peace from his eternal prating



of self. *His* property, *his* pheasants, *his* horses, *his* retainers—perpetually crammed down the throats of us wretched ‘Scillies,’ poor, but proud, sweltering in our exile at Shikarpur. Where the dickens the Weevor wealth came from, no one rightly knew. Riversden, his cousin, on his mother’s side, hinted mysteriously at a soap-boiling ancestry, one of whom had been married by a Riversden for his money. Anyhow, the money was undeniably there, and we poor subs, deep in the banks, and eternally wheedling advances out of old Munnie, the paymaster, loathed this boy who chucked the sovereigns and the English cheques broadcast through the station, and lorded it over us in our own mess. He annoyed dear old C.O., a model of good taste and of a gentleman, as befitted the regimental traditions. He enraged the major, who had a handle to his name, but not a penny besides his pay, and a short temper to boot. He deteriorated our young fellows’ form.



We grew weary of Weevor. We gave him broad hints that he had outstayed his welcome among us. We enlarged on green fields and pastures new, and of fresh game to be shot, new sights to be seen in other parts of the shining East than Shikarpur. But Weevor was obtuse. The darling of his mother, the apple of his guardian's eye, the bright particular star of Weevorhurst and that corner of the county, it never dawned upon him that we of the 'Scillies,' cooped up in Shikarpur, might not be otherwise than much indebted to him for the sunshine of his presence. Besides, the Weevor had fallen in love with Kitty Bligh—which was not surprising.

When the rains were over and gone, and the punkah-coolies and the brain-fever bird had vanished with the hot season, pretty Kitty Bligh had swooped down upon us from the school at Brighton where she had been brought up. That was some months



ago now, and sufficient time had elapsed for her to turn every male European head in the cantonment—bald or curly, grey or brown—whether surmounted with a soldier's helmet, or the less becoming mushroom pith-hat of the civilian. We had all gone through the fire, none had escaped a singeing. Not a few men had proposed, and there were some dark rumours that a couple of antique and demure engagements to girls at home, which smouldered on by means of intermittent mail-letters, and of photos fast fading in the Indian glare, had suddenly been broken off. The women of the station, from whom Kitty was too pretty to expect much charity, laid all this to her door. But it did not appear to affect her much, or to damp her spirits, for Miss Kitty grew prettier and archer, and more flirtatious every week.

What wonder that Weevor had fallen an easy prey where wiser men had lost their heads. Weevor took the complaint badly,



and Mamma Bligh, a scheming old commissioner's wife, fanned the flame industriously, and made up to Weevor in the most bare-faced manner. The owner of many miles of country in a ring-fence, and of one of the finest places in the county, was not to be found loafing in every *dâk bungalow* in India, and was of more value in her eyes than many penniless subs, or even a rising young *stunt sahib*, or collector.

And Kitty behaved shamefully. Jealous, mortified, angry, disappointed, we all vowed we had hoped—had expected—better things of her, that she was a shameless fortune-hunting, mercenary little wretch, was the most thorough-paced little flirt, the—dearest, most charming little girl we had ever known in each one of our several lives! Such is man, when effectually caught! But we all hated Weevor with a deadly hatred. If he had bored us before, he just enraged us now. We tried



all we knew to get rid of him. We implored Riversden to send him home to his mamma. We racked our brains with the invention of ghastly practical jokes to make him appear ridiculous in Kitty's eyes, and to show him how unpopular he was in ours. But love made Weevor brave. He put up nobly with apple-pie beds, devastated rooms, packed-up and addressed boxes, man-traps and ambuscades, sewn-up or be-floured raiment, and hoaxes of every description—as long as Kitty's black eyes smiled upon him.

Which they did till 'the boy' came back from leave. Never mind his real name, though it had done credit to the roll of the 'Scillies' in many a hard-fought polo, cricket, or tennis match, in more than stiff little tussles with Hazaras, Afridis, and other hill-tribes against whom the 'Scilly Islanders' have not been sent in vain. He was just 'the boy,' and the pet of the corps, just as much as their



goat is to the Welsh Fusiliers. At home, in England, where he had now been on a year's leave, our 'boy' was a very smart, good-looking young man of about five-and-twenty, heir to a little property in Somersetshire, and much sought after in his own set.

The first night 'the boy' once more found his legs under our regimental mahogany—a much-revered piece of furniture, down the centre of which we had danced many a breakdown on festive guest-nights—I do not know what astonished him most—Weevor, or Kitty Bligh. For it was a ladies' dinner-party (we actually had mustered nearly a dozen ladies in Shikarpur) and the fair Kitty was having a good time. So was Weevor. But his days were numbered, and it was his last innings. From that day out, slowly, but surely, 'the boy' (bless him!) began to elbow the T. G. out of Kitty's affections—if, indeed, he had



really ever gained a firm footing there.

'The boy' had fallen in love with Kitty, of course: but, strange to say, Kitty the coquette, the faithless, soon evinced a decided partiality for 'the boy,' which was speedily strengthened and increased, after the wayward, inscrutable manner of maidens, by the fact that her mamma expressed her disapproval of the new arrival most strongly, and took sides with Weevor. Everyone was thus put on their mettle. What might have passed off in mere flirtations, became, by dint of opposition, very serious attachments. 'The boy' went about, quite disconsolate, gnashing his teeth at globe-trotters in general, and raving at wealth. Weevor, poor wretch, alternately deluded by Mamma Bligh's insinuations, and disillusioned by her daughter's snubs, did not know if he was standing on his head or his heels. All the players in the game were in a ferment. But the old lady kept her head, and



played her cards best. What pressure she brought to bear upon her daughter I do not know, but poor Kitty's eyes were often red, and she was only allowed to speak to 'the boy' on sufferance, as it were, and within the maternal ear-shot. We all felt we were living on a volcano, and did not know what an hour might bring forth. Metaphorically, we all held our breaths to await the next move; our best wishes, but our worst fears, with 'the boy' and Kitty.

Things had come to this pass when Mamma Bligh, with the view of expediting a crisis and bringing Weevor to the point, organised a picnic some miles out at a spot—an old Hindoo temple in a mango-grove, above a deep ravine—which passed for picturesque in the dull level of monotonous sun-baked plain which composed the landscape round Shikarpur. Beyond the *nullah* or ravine, stretched a dry, treeless desert, well known as a resort of black buck, and a happy shooting-ground. This being the



case, Riversden announced his intention of starting early in the morning, and having a try at the black buck on his way to the picnic. Weever, not to be outdone in prowess, and anxious to cut a sporting figure before Kitty, said he would join him. The two started early. About ten, when the picnic party arrived at the temple, neither had yet turned up. We began the ample breakfast which Mrs. Bligh had provided under the shadow of the mango-trees. In Weever's absence 'the boy' made the running, much to everybody's satisfaction, including Kitty's. Mamma could say nothing, as it was Weever's own fault for not putting in an appearance. We had almost finished breakfast when Riversden appeared, but alone. He had seen nothing of his cousin. They had separated on arriving at the shooting-ground, each to stalk in a different direction. Riversden fancied he had heard his gun, but had been too engrossed with a couple of lucky



shots of his own to pay much attention. We fed Riversden, and then lolled about on rugs, smoking under the shade of the mangoes, while a crow or two cawed in the branches overhead. I noticed Kitty and 'the boy' sat apart under the cover of the old temple wall, pensively throwing stones into the deep *nullah* below, while some pigeons overhead, among the ruined masonry, cooed appropriately.

But the sun grew hot and its rays vertical. Even in the cold weather King Sol commands respect. Presently there was a general calling up of carriages and horses, a doffing the light and gaudy headgear of fashion for an ugly uniform of white cork helmets, or broad Terai hats of double felt, and we turned homewards. But Weevor had not appeared.

It was an off-day, no parade. Fellows had gone their divers ways, and the mess was empty when such of us as had been Mrs. Bligh's guests turned in thither for a



‘peg’ to wash the dust out of our throats. And as we sat in the verandah discussing the same, Dickens, the magistrate, in his bamboo cart, drove fast up the gravel sweep and hailed us.

‘I say, you fellows! Is the colonel in? Or Robertson? (our adjutant). Here’s your friend—what’s his name—Wee—Wee—vor been getting into the very deuce of a mess! The police at Gowka Thana have sent in to me. They’ve got him there!’

‘What the deuce has the young ass been up to, I wonder!’ ejaculated his cousin; and, none of the seniors being on the spot, he jumped into Dickens’s cart and drove off to the rescue, while I followed on a pony to see him through it.

We had a longish and hot drive to Gowka Thana, which lay by a little village of that name on the outskirts of the wide plain where the black buck were to be found. Sitting in the bare Thana upon the dingy *charpoy* of the policeman, we



found Weevor looking most disconsolate. His china-blue eyes wore an expression almost of terror as the magistrate entered, followed by his blue-bloused myrmidons of the law.

‘I say,’ he exclaimed, ‘Mr. Dickens, will you explain to me what’s up? I thought the villagers would tear me to pieces before the police got me in here! And now they’ve taken away my rifle!’

‘I hear you’ve had some sport?’ remarked the magistrate, somewhat grimly.

‘Sport? I should think so! Big game, and no mistake, this time; none of your little black antelope for me!’

‘Tell us about it,’ said Dickens, sitting down on the *charpoy*, while the police formed a semicircle round, and outside, through the narrow-barred window, we could see the faces of the *ryots*, jabbering, gesticulating, and watching eagerly.

‘Why, you know, Riversden, that we agreed to take left and right hand, and my



way lay out in the direction of Gowka. I didn't see any black buck, at least not within shot; they bounded away as soon as I caught sight of them.'

'Or they of you, you idiot! You didn't stalk 'em properly,' muttered Riversden, *sotto voce*.

'And it grew very hot—awful—sun pouring down—and I put down my rifle, and sat under the shade of a bush. Not much shade, though, and it soon went, and I moved on and forgot my rifle—left it against the bush. A few steps further on I found another bush, better shade, and I was dead beat with the heat, and lay down and went to sleep, I fancy. But I was awoke suddenly by a terrific roar. A *griff* would have thought it was a tiger, but, by Jove! man, it was a splendid bull bison, and coming straight at me, too, charging down upon me! I can tell you I jumped up pretty nippy and put the bush between me and it. And then I re-



membered my rifle. But the beast had got between me and it, and I couldn't get to it. He watched me with his wicked little eyes, and when I tried to make a dive for my rifle, down he came, bellowing, pawing, waving his tail, and shaking his shaggy black mane, and I had to dodge again. Jove! I should think I was a good half-hour, ducking, and running, and dodging that beast about the plain, before I managed to get the rifle. And then I had a run for it. But I managed to get the hole where the bullocks walk up and down to work a well, between me and him. We were not far off the village then, but, instead of getting shy, he seemed as game as ever. I took a steady aim, and, as he came charging towards the well-hole, I took him straight in the chest, and he dropped dead—first shot, man!

Weevor had forgotten his alarm, and had become quite excited and eloquent.

‘You didn't know there were any bison



so near, did you now ?' he added, turning to Riversden and the magistrate with an air of superiority.

Old Dickens wagged his beard at him for a moment in silence.

'Bison be blowed !' he said at last. 'Do you know what you've done, boy ? You've shot the sacred Brahminee bull of Gowka ! This is a Hindoo village,' he went on, 'and I wonder they didn't tear you limb from limb !' he added, waving to the angry black faces outside the windows.

Poor Weevor looked at them and shuddered.

'Good Lord !' he said. 'Not a bison ? What have I done ?'

'The sacred bull, sir,' continued Dickens, in his most impressive manner, 'blessed by the priest as a calf, and allowed to run about tame, feeding when and how it likes, from the *buniahs*' grain-baskets on their stalls, from the ripe crops—anything, everywhere. Not a soul



would touch a hair of its head. And now,' he added, 'to get you out of this!'

Two policemen went in front, then Dickens, then Weevor, trembling visibly. We passed out of the Thana, through a decidedly unfriendly crowd, jabbering, grumbling, and muttering. The police shoved them aside with their batons, and we reached the bamboo cart. Dickens ensconced Weevor between himself and Riversden, took the reins, and ordered a policeman to replace the groom in the net-work behind, whereon the domestic in attendance on this serviceable vehicle is wont to maintain a precarious seat. I was careful to ride in close proximity, and we lost no time in getting clear of the village.

As the muttering of the crowd grew fainter, Weevor ventured to look round.

'My rifle!' he exclaimed.

'Rifle be blowed!' growled old Dickens.



‘You don’t know what trouble you’ve let me in for!’

‘But surely ample compensation——’ began Weevor.

‘Compensation, sir? Money, sir? You don’t know what you’re talking about! Do you think money will compensate them for having one of their gods shot?—for really such it is. Why, man, you’ve stirred up fanaticism, religious outbreak, riots, the Lord knows what!’

‘I’m very sorry, I’m sure!’ stammered Weevor.

‘Sorry? Sorry? I should think you were!’ continued the representative of the executive, lashing himself up into a rage, as he thought of the endless questions, lengthy correspondence, and subsequent wigging from the Government this Gowka bull business would bring down upon his head. ‘I wouldn’t be in your shoes for a good bit!’ he added, having a fling at the wretched Weevor as the origin of all



the bother. But Weevor took it differently.

‘Do you mean to say the natives—might—that there is any danger?’ he asked, imploringly.

‘I don’t say anything, I don’t know what to say, or think! For goodness sake hold your tongue, man, about it, and keep quiet. That’s the best thing you can do.’

‘Most unfortunate! But I had quite intended to have left Shikarpur before now.’

‘*Most* unfortunate you didn’t!’ growled Dickens.

‘But, perhaps, if it’s as bad as you say, (that crowd was awful when they pursued me before the police came,) I had better—lose no time—only there’s that dance to-morrow night. I must stop for that. Don’t you think it would be safe for me to stop over the dance?’ he asked, imploringly.



‘Can’t say. Won’t vouch for it,’ muttered Dickens, between his teeth. But his eye caught mine, and he winked. He really was annoyed with Weevor for the bother he was giving him, and so he let him have it.

The latter’s nerves had been thoroughly shaken. The miserable victim of outraged Hindoo fanaticism was so shaky that we could hardly persuade him to come across from his bungalow to dinner at the mess. But when we had got him there he fortified himself so thoroughly with champagne that his fears all vanished. He talked himself into the belief that he was a hero, besides being a first-rate shot at big game. Any intention of bolting from the vengeance of the infuriated Hindoos gave place to a bombastic decision to stay over the dance.

‘Not shtay for dansh, ol’ man? Oh! nonsense, yer know, mush shtay for that, ye know—chertain reason, ye know



—mush square matters with—with—you know who. Eh? Bother those nigger chaps! They be blowed—not goin' be done out of my dansh by lot o' niggers—by a bles'hd ol' bull—oh! no, not I, old chappy——'

And so on, till Riversden and I gently escorted him home about midnight, descending on his bull all the way down the road.

Weevor had slept for about an hour, when, from various points, figures might have been seen in the moonlight converging upon the bungalow which he shared with his cousin. Across the compound wall, through the gateways, up the drive, and towards the verandah, they advanced with a jabbering and shouting calculated to awaken almost any sleeper. That they were natives, their dark faces and white turbans left no doubt, though their lower extremities, below their white garments, were of a more hybrid nature. Here and



there the gold stripe of a mess trouser sparked in the moonlight.

Then with one wild yell, and any amount of bad Hindoostanee, they precipitated themselves into the room where Weevor, still half-stupid, had sprung up in bed, scared out of his life. There was a brandishing of sticks, and, at a supreme moment, a blank cartridge was fired off in the room, which reverberated in the most appalling and effective manner.

At the sound of this Weevor gave a howl of dismay, and, jumping out of bed, rushed through the room, out at the bathroom door, and across the parade-ground in his pyjamas, pursued by the yelling crowd, and never paused till he found himself safe in the welcome shelter of the guard-room.

A little later, and we were all collected in my bungalow, washing our faces and cooling our thirsty throats with 'pegs.' Riversden came from the guard-room.

‘ Well, how is he?’

‘ As well as can be expected. I’ve given him a strong peg and put him to bed in the guard-room bed. He says he’ll leave by the five a.m. mail train.’

And so he did, and Shikarpur and the ‘ Scillies ’ saw him no more.

‘ The boy’s ’ engagement to Kitty Bligh was announced at the dance the next evening.



### CAUGHT IN A DUST-STORM.

‘JOVE! Cleverest pony I’ve ever seen!’

The speaker was Cis Sabretasche, our great ‘jock’ in the Crimson Cuirassiers. Sabretasche is a scion of a noble family which came in with the Conqueror. In dress and language he resembles a groom. But he is a first-rate light-weight, and reflects glory upon the Crimsons.

‘How? What? Don’t understand you,’ put in Hurlstone, rather sulkily.

Now Hurlstone’s one of the best fellows in the regiment, and did not use to be sulky. But the reason of his grumpiness the ensuing little tale shall set forth.

The scene was the Noluck racecourse,



one morning, oh ! so early, at the beginning of the hot weather, when morning stables were over, and while the punkah-coolie was still at rest. A knot of us, some mounted, some on foot, stood in the shadow of the grand stand, watching other fellows gallop their ponies for a *gymkhana* which was to come off shortly. At that moment it was Cramwell, the *stunt sahib*, or assistant magistrate, who was the cynosure of all eyes.

‘Of course he can give a deuced long price for his animals—these infernal *competition wallahs* draw no end of rupees,’ Hurlstone continued. (He was in a very bad temper.)

Sabretasche eyed him with a twinkle in his keen little grey eyes.

‘Be calm, dear boy. It ain’t that I was alludin’ to. It *is* a clever pony. See how he throws up the fellow at every jump and catches him again the other side ! Awfully neat thing, by Jove !’



And with a wave of the hand he indicated Cramwell's apparently most insecure seat as he took a remarkably smart pony over the jumps.

We chuckled, we Cuirassiers. We cannot pass exams, many of us, or patter the lingo to the natives, but we can sit down over a fence, just. Hurlstone laughed most of all. The grin was still on his face as Cramwell pulled up in front of the stand, and, jumping off the pony, threw the bridle to a native and yelled for his bamboo cart.

'Fit, isn't he? I must be off down to *cutcherry*. Can't stand here all day, like you fellows. Meet you at Mrs. Matchingleigh's tennis this afternoon, I suppose?'

He glanced round at us all as he said this, but it was really to Hurlstone that question was addressed. He *knew Hurlstone was not invited*, and he meant to give him a nasty one.

The pride and delight of Noluck that



season were Colonel Matchingleigh's pretty twin daughters, Rose and Violet. Their papa was as old a woman as ever commanded a native infantry regiment, and their mamma as old a soldier as ever schemed and angled to marry her daughters. But the twins were quite charming. We all loved them both, but Hurlstone and Cramwell loved one more than the other, and that one was Violet.

Hurlstone was as good a fellow and a sportsman as ever tried to keep his head above water in a crack cavalry regiment on four hundred a year beside his pay, and no further prospects whatever. He was hopelessly in debt, and would be so to the end of the chapter. But he was straight, and long-legged, and well-looking, with frank Saxon blue eyes, which went straight to every girl's heart, and just the right shade of side on, which we Cuirassiers cultivated to a nicety.

Cramwell—well, he could not ride, as I



have shown, and he was too busy to have had time to cultivate the fine art of flirtation. His shoulders were rather round, and he was abominably dressed by an Allahabad tailor and a *durzee* in the bazaar. Conversationally he knew too much about India and too little about 'home.' Prior to being posted to the East-by-West provinces, at eighteen, his life had been passed at a remote Scotch grammar-school, I fancy, whence he had come out with flying colours in the Civil Service exam. Harry Hurlstone had been at Eton, had scraped through Sandhurst by the skin of his teeth, and looked forward to his next garrison course with undisguised alarm. But the ways of maidens are inscrutable. Violet Matchingleigh liked Hurlstone. Anyone could tell that. But Mamma Matchingleigh's views were otherwise.

Hence Hurlstone's abominable temper. And I ought to know, for I took him for a ride that afternoon, when all the rest of



the Noluck world was at Mrs. Matchingleigh's tennis, and did not find him the most agreeable of companions.

When it grew dusk, and the carriage lamps began to twinkle up and down the Mall, and it was yet too early to tub and dress for mess, I suggested we should turn in to Mrs. Linnington's. We found that lady attired in an airy tea-gown, sitting in a long chair on the *chabboutia*, or raised cement platform, in what she was pleased to call her garden. For the hot weather was beginning, the trees were dropping their leaves after the manner of their kind, and the glory of the bouganvillias and alamanda bushes was over. All the other Cuirassierladies had hied themselves homewards, or hill-wards. But Mrs. Linnington, the best little woman that ever breathed, had stuck to the major, and the major had been obliged to stick to the regiment.

To her Hurlstone growled out his grievances. Men, and women, too, have a knack



of doing this with Mrs. Linnington. She listened most sympathetically, while, in the gathering gloom, a little bearer-boy waved a huge palm-leaf fan over his head. Then she called for 'pegs,' and a white-robed *kitmutghar* dispensed the iced soda and its accompaniment.

'She's an old cat, that's what she is!' remarked Mrs. Linnington to us, as we buried our faces in the long tumblers. 'A regular *Indian* woman, black infantry—can I say more?'

We grunted our assent, for we Cuirassiers loved not the land of our temporary exile, except from the point of view to pay.

'A "lifer," and wants to make that poor child one, too,' muttered Hurlstone. 'I feel fit to hang myself. She never lets her out of her sight now, if I'm within a quarter of a mile. If I go and call, it's "*darwazar bund*" (the door is shut). And that ass Cramwell dines there every night, I'm told!'



‘It’s just absurd,’ said Mrs. Linnington, irefully. ‘What are we “Crimsons” that we should be spurned by a set of—of—of—Anglo-Indians,’ she added, with the air of one who can say no worse. But little Mrs. Linnington was a British Cuirassier from the topmost curl of her pretty fringe to her very toes.

‘I’m very sorry for you, poor boy!’ said she.

‘But there’s Rose,’ I interposed, meaning well, but with brutal masculine obtuseness. ‘Rose is an awfully pretty girl, and as like Violet as two peas—voice, height, manner. I never know one from the other. Not a pin to——’

‘Good Lord! man,’ cried Hurlstone. ‘To talk to me like that!’

And then he launched forth. There is no reasoning with a man in love, and his arguments are not worth recording. We let him talk himself out till the first dinner-trumpet sounded from the mess.



Then Mrs. Linnington rose and held out her hand to us.

‘It’s awfully dull here now, so many people going or gone, and the heat growing every day. I want to do something fresh. What do you say to a riding-party out to Chinhut on Thursday? I’ll ask the Matchingleigh girls and one or two others.’

‘It’ll be an awfully good idea!’ cried Hurlstone.

‘But I shall have to ask that Cramwell too, or I shan’t be allowed to have them, you know,’ she added, maliciously.

Hurlstone flicked his brown leather riding-boot gloomily.

‘I *had* been thinking of going out after the black buck on Thursday,’ he said, sullenly.

‘Nonsense, you will come to my riding-party,’ returned Mrs. Linnington, with decision. ‘I order you to.’

Then we all separated to dress for dinner.

A beloved and beneficent Commander-



in-Chief, whose kindly face now beams down in bronze upon his former comrades in arms as they hail hansoms at the door of the 'Senior,' has instituted Thursday as a garrison holiday throughout India. The pig, the black buck, and the snipe know it to their cost. So, though it was close, and hazy, and stifling, after a sultry night, we rose joyfully, and attired ourselves in the check cotton riding-suits of mufti for the day. No uniform till mess, except for the luckless fellows on duty.

We all met at Mrs. Linnington's bungalow. On the macadam sweep in front of the verandah, as I galloped up, were already gathered Hurlstone (he had been the first to arrive), the twins, looking to the average eye equally charming in white drill habits and broad pith hats, the hostess herself (the major had turned lazy, and was taking what is termed a 'Europe morning,') and Cis Sabretasche as master of the ceremonies. Then one or two others



turned up; but Cramwell had not yet come.

When he did put in an appearance, it was with the irritating cheeriness of a busy man taking a holiday which he means thoroughly to enjoy. He was pleased with himself, pleased with his nice new pony, and pleased with Violet Matching-leigh.

But we were none of us pleased with him as we straggled out down the Mall. Sabretasche led us across the bridge of boats, and then gave the order.

‘Now for Chinhut, and—go as you please.’

Away we went in the early morning light, across the young crops, skirting the poppy-fields, over the open waste. We popped over little irrigation watercourses, and negotiated the earth-banks which enclosed the cultivated ground. It was a general scurry. Sabretasche, in giving



the order, perhaps had hoped that the pace would tell, and that Cramwell, who had attached himself from the first to Violet's side, would be forced to give place to a better horseman. For Mrs. Linnington had been brought up in Leicestershire, and the twins, who had been born in India, had ridden ponies of sorts before they could walk, and so we all cracked on the pace.

But love gave Cramwell courage, and, to say the truth, he had got hold of a good thing in his new purchase.

And so it came to pass that Violet Matchingleigh rode on, a cavalier on either hand, maintaining an incoherent triangular conversation, while the daylight grew apace, and the heat too.

For oh! it was hot! There was not a vestige of the faint coolness which may be looked for at this season about sunrise. There was not a breath stirring, and the



air seemed like a furnace. Happily, the sun, though it had risen, was nowhere to be seen.

Now this was odd. The sun is always with us in India except during the rains. A grey day is the rarest thing. But this morning the sky was not grey but yellow-red, one uniform tint throughout, and, though the sun forebore to shine down upon us, the air felt like a furnace blast.

Among a dark framework of mango topes the white stucco towers and terraces of Chinhut rose before us. We were not sorry to reach it and throw our bridles to the waiting grooms who had been sent on ahead. Chinhut had been a summer palace of the kings of Noluck in pre-mutiny times. But its glory is departed now. The bat, the flying-fox, and the prowling jackal haunt the spot; the courtyards and terraces have fallen into ruins, and only the principal façade is kept up as



a kind of Government bungalow, used as a sanatorium, or as a hermitage *à deux* for honeymooning couples.

Under a sort of *loggia*, which commanded a view of the wide plain with the distant river and towers and minarets of the city, Mrs. Linnington had had laid a liberal early breakfast. There was tea and toast and eggs for those who liked, and effervescing beverages for those who did not. And we were all of us thirsty, and some of us even a little hungry, which is saying a good deal, when one considers the weather.

‘What’s become of the sun?’ asked some one, when we had all had a drink.

‘Oh! don’t ask, I’m sure we don’t want him!’ was the answer.

‘What a queer morning!’

‘We’re going to have a storm, I should think!’

‘Looks like it,’ said Sabretasche, glancing



at where Violet sat between her two rival swains, each looking more glum than the other.

‘Your sister doesn’t look quite happy,’ I remarked, in a low voice to Rose Matchingleigh, who sat by me, toying with a water-melon.

‘Vi’s an idiot!’ she replied, in a sisterly manner, ‘and doesn’t know which side her bread is buttered, as mamma and I are always telling her.’

‘Well, both sides seem to be laying on the butter pretty thick!’

‘Papa says Mr. Cramwell will die a lieutenant-governor,’ Rose went on, with importance. ‘It isn’t often a girl gets such a chance her first season, only she won’t see it. And papa’s retiring next year, and we shall have to go home. If I were Vi——’

‘Oh! is that the way the cat jumps?’

‘I think you’re very rude,’ returned the young lady, with dignity.



‘I’m Harry Hurlstone’s friend,’ I replied.

But then there came a general move. Somebody began to prophesy about the storm again, and there was a call for ponies. Mrs. Linnington thought we ought to hurry home.

Cramwell stole a march on Hurlstone and had the happiness of mounting Miss Violet, and of tucking her little foot into her stirrup, an operation over which he took an unnecessarily long time. Hurlstone came up to Sabretasche and me in a rage.

‘I say, Sabby, can’t you take us home down that green road with the lot of open wells in it. I want to give that fellow a chance of breaking his neck,’ he growled, only in more forcible language than I can here reproduce.

‘My dear boy! we’ve got to get the ladies home as quick as we can. Look at the sky, there’s a tempest of some kind coming on.



And indeed the weather looked still more strange. As soon as we got outside the mango-groves into the open, we perceived a dark bank of clouds coming up fast. We had not long left Chinhut behind ere a wind got up, suddenly, whistlingly, and the clouds came up against the wind.

Mrs. Linnington shivered, though it was so hot.

‘I don’t like it,’ she said. ‘It might be the end of the world.’

‘It’s a dust-storm, madam,’ I replied; ‘hurry up.’

And still the clouds came on apace, turning from black to red, and piling up as if thrown by some giant’s hand from below the horizon.

We rode and we rode, but the storm gained on us. Then it burst with a whistle and a roar, and a darkness which might be felt. We all stopped where we were, the horses of their own accord



turning their tails to the tempest, and laying their ears back.

Then the dust came pelting, driving, choking, deafening, till we could hardly breathe. Where one self was, or where the others were, no one could make out. You could not see a yard in front of you, and everyone had done the best for himself. Mrs. Linnington had jumped off and crouched under a bank, I believe, her handkerchief over her head, and I was holding her horse. But the animals were dazed and quite quiet.

How long the darkness and the whistle of the driving dust lasted I cannot say, but gradually the latter grew less, though the darkness was still opaque, the luridness of a London fog, only red instead of yellow. I could breathe again, and was about to move forward and look for Mrs. Linnington, when through the gloom came a sound of low voices.



‘Oh! Mr. Cramwell, what am I to say?’

‘Say, my darling? Oh! that you care for me, that you’ll have me! Oh, dearest, you don’t know!’

‘Oh, but I *do* know. Only, Mr. Cramwell, I’m not good enough, or clever——’

‘Dearest. Don’t talk like that!’

‘Oh, Joe!’ (Cramwell’s name was Joseph.)

Silence, and I moved away as noiselessly as I could. It grew lighter, and I made my way to a group of bushes whence Mrs. Linnington, terrified, called to me. I put her on her pony. The air had grown much cooler, and the darkness was gradually rolling away towards the east. But there was a feeling as if our lungs and throats were parched. Our faces and clothes were powdered with sand.

Then arose the question, ‘Where are the others?’ They gradually collected—all but Hurlstone and Violet Matching-



leigh. They appeared to have vanished in the storm.

But Rose Matchingleigh came up to Mrs. Linnington gaily.

‘Have you been very frightened, poor thing? I was, only Joe was with me; and Joe—Joe, won’t you come and tell Mrs. Linnington?’

And with a wave of her hand she beckoned up poor Cramwell, with such a dejection written on his face as I never saw on man’s before.

‘Mrs. Linnington,’ she said, ‘Mr. Cramwell and I are engaged.’

‘Oh, dear, I *am* so glad!’ cried Mrs. Linnington, with effusiveness, and we all pressed round this pair and proffered our congratulations with alacrity.

Then we rode home. It was cooler, and the sun came out gradually, and the world smiled again. The engaged couple rode on a long way in front.

On the Mall we came up with Hurlstone



and Violet, the former in roaring spirits, full of jokes about the dust-storm, and Violet just radiant.

He rode off with her to the parental bungalow in triumph.

A little later he looked in upon me in the mess.

‘It’s all square,’ he cried, ‘and there’s to be a double wedding. That blessed dust storm!’ he added, slapping me on the back.

### A HILL TRAGEDY.

HARRY HERNHURST could never quite tell how it came to pass. The hour was 2.30 a.m., in a glorious tropical night. The scene, the verandah of Government House, Naini Tal, six thousand odd feet above the level of the sea. There is something intoxicatingly amorous in the very air of the Himalayas. The moon was shining in upon them, too, and such a moon! Not the weak, watery satellite we are accustomed to put up with in these zones, but a great, luminous disc, casting inky shadows in the dim corner where the two sat together on a low wicker settee. Yet its light was strong enough



for Hilda to read her programme as she leant forward into it, while a dreamy strain of a languid German waltz floated out upon them from the ball-room behind.

Number seventeen,' she murmured; and some fearful hieroglyphics—I can't read—yes, it's little Sandeman.'

She looked exquisitely handsome, as the moonlight turned her bare white neck to pure ivory, and glinted the gold of her red-brown hair.

Hernhurst leant forward, too, and placed his hand on her wrist.

'Cut him. Don't go—*please!*'

She turned her face round to his, her eyes gleaming in the shadow. Yet he could see their look distinctly.

'Cut him? Shall I, poor boy? Do *you* want me to?'

The tone was very soft and low. The eyes looked into his, her breath fanned his hair. The white wrist lay passively in his palm.



‘Do I?’ gasped Hernhurst, quickly catching his breath. ‘Oh, Hilda!——’

And then the die was cast, and, all in an instant, the fatal question was asked and answered, and ere the last strain of the dreamy German waltz died away in the ball-room in a confused harmony of minor chords, Hernhurst was an engaged man.

The next day all Naini Tal rang with the news. Down on the tennis-ground, in the reading-room, where women gossip and read the *Queen*, and in the club, where men drink pegs and play poker, even out on the little green lake, which is the centre of the Naini world, and where the canoes float flirtaciously, men and women discussed the affair.

‘Well, it was *time*,’ said the spiteful one. ‘Hilda Hayes is getting on, and I fancied this season just a *leetle* going off, you know.’

‘I felt sure it would come to this, when I watched them acting together in



“Our Boys,” said someone else, superiorly.

‘I don’t believe she cares a rap about him, *really*,’ put in another, acrimoniously.

‘There have been *so* many,’ sneered a snubbed one.

‘She *really* was in love with that young Frere, who was killed at Maiwand,’ volunteered a well-informed person.

‘But she has done well for herself now. Hernhurst’s the heir to a baronetcy—lovely old place in Sussex.’

‘Quite the show man in the Rifles.’

‘And a deuced lucky one, too,’ put in a disappointed swain. ‘She beats any girl in Naini this season, or in Simla too, for the matter of that, as to looks and figure.’

And, strange to say, there was not a woman in the place could deny that fact. So they fell to pulling to pieces her temper and her manners, and finally, *faute de mieux*, her clothes.

Engagements are not long in India. Life is precarious, changes rapid, society



fugitive. Miss Hayes wrote home and ordered some of her trousseau by the next mail after that Government House ball, and gave orders forthwith for the one and only dressmaker in Naini to commence upon her wedding-gown. Papa Hayes' leave was up early in September, and his daughter had no mind to tempt the plains climate at that season in his company. But if she was to remain at Naini Tal it would have to be as Mrs. Hernhurst.

So the *durzees* toiled apace, holding the wedding garments between their dirty toes as they sat cross-legged in the verandah, and Papa Hayes wrote down to Calcutta and ordered the champagne, also oysters from Bombay, and the cake from Peliti's, the great Italian confectioner at Simla. The thing was to be done well.

All this time, Harry Hernhurst, paraded here, there, and everywhere, like a prize lamb, bore his honours meekly, and,



in the foolishness of his love-sick heart, gazed enraptured on his handsome *fiancée*, counting himself a thrice-blest mortal. Not the combined chaff of his brother officers and of the club, where an engaged man is considered fair sport, disturbed him one little bit.

But into this blissful state of things burst a bombshell. It was really most inconsiderate of old Lady Hernhurst, but she did it. She went and died suddenly, in the middle of all these preparations, died far away in her English home, and her poor old husband felt the blow so severely that he sent for his son and heir to return to him.

The colonel of the Rifles was easily squared. No difficulty in getting leave on 'urgent private affairs,' if a fellow's mother has died and his old father very ill! But with Miss Hayes things were not so easily arranged. She strongly objected to Hernhurst's departure. Could he



not wait a bit, and they would go home together?

But no; Harry, lover that he was, was a good son too. He insisted upon hurrying off at once, and, when it dawned upon Hilda that the old man might perhaps die, and the property, unentailed, might pass away to the next son, she no longer begged for delay. The wedding should be hurried, she would forego all the fuss and to-do she had planned about it. But here Harry felt that, somehow, this beautiful, joyous creature, an utter stranger to them all, would be out of place in the now darkened home, where they were longing for him. Besides, everyone knows how the hurried rush home on three months' leave, through Egypt, and overland from Brindisi, a mad whirl of eighteen days in the bad weather, is trying to the complexion and the constitution.

There was no knowing quite how matters would have ended. But one day



there came a peremptory telegram. Sir Henry was worse, and his son rushed down to Bombay before there was time to think of getting married.

Hilda resigned herself complacently to the inevitable. There was time now, she told herself, to get her wedding-dress out from Paris. Likewise, good actress and fine soprano that she was, she accepted an invitation to play the leading part in a grand amateur opera, which was to be the theatrical climax of the Naini Tal season.

Summer-time in England! Among the roses, the strawberries, the tennis-nets, and the trout. While his Hilda was in great demand at rehearsals during the hot days and the drenching monsoons, Harry Hernhurst was enjoying himself in Sussex. It is very sweet to be home again after six years of India, especially if home means a place like Hernhurst Hall. The



old baronet had revived and recovered at his son's return. The sisters were enraptured to receive the eldest brother back again. What if the mother's grave is not yet green under the old elms which overshadow the family burial-place of the Hernhursts? Her sweet spirit seems to hover over the old place, and to add a sad pleasure to being once more in the old spot amongst one's kith and kin. Naini Tal, and the glare and glamour of the East, seemed far, so far, away—Hilda, of the white neck and the gleaming eyes, a lovely dream. She did not write much; she was too busy. The theatrical venture was very successful that year. Being engaged gives a girl additional *aplomb*, more latitude, and two or three of her old admirers had turned up. The future Lady Hernhurst could afford to be gracious!

The summer deepened. The scent of the hay vanished from among the leafy



lanes; on the hillsides the corn grew golden, and the hop-vines bent heavily-laden from their poles. The vintage of England was at hand. And then one evening, when the shadows lay long over the green lawns, came the unexpected to Hernhurst Hall. 'Master Harry,' as the old servants still called him, in a way that spoke volumes for his popularity, was carried in from the tennis-ground with a broken leg and a twisted ankle. This meant extension of leave.

The wedding-dress had arrived at Naini Tal from Paris. It was a dream of beauty. Hilda tried it on (unluckily!) and, her glass told her, never looked better. The mists hung early and late on the green lake in its crater-basin among the rhododendron-clad precipices. The monsoon was over the land. But the fun ceased not in the frivolous Naini. Captain Squawker, the new tenor, was delightful, and *so* good-looking! Really, kind people



said, 'If one hadn't known that Miss Hayes was engaged to a rich man at home, one would have thought——'

At home, in Sussex, ere the broken leg was healed, and while it still lay extended in a cradle before its owner, who had to be amused, little Effie Grimdale, the youngest Miss Hernhurst's school chum, came to stay with her friend, and, from the first, amused and interested her friend's invalid brother.

Effie was a *petite* girl, very young, very shy, very pretty, with big questioning eyes, whom everyone pitied. She was motherless, poor child, and just going out to India to her father, a somewhat stern colonel of native cavalry.

In the early autumn gloamings, when the sunset glinted the old hall at Hernhurst, and the rooks cawed themselves to rest among the avenue, Harry, his leg extended as usual on the couch, by the vast fireside round which the family were wont to



assemble in winter at five o'clock tea, got into the way, somehow, of watching little Effie's brown head as she hung over her knitting, and pondering how life in India would suit the child.

She had so much to ask about this strange new life, and he so much to tell. But not the kind of stories which would have found favour in Hilda's eyes. Somehow or other, he hardly knew why, Harry scarcely ever mentioned the latter to Effie. It did not seem quite right. As well tell the purring kitten which nestles to your heart of the beautiful striped tiger which stalks the jungle. It would startle the kitten to know that such creatures existed.

She was such a thoroughly English little girl, so fresh, so unsophisticated, a complexion as of a daisy, and had an utter ignorance of men and things as in these days was astonishing. She seemed to suit the old oak panelling and woodland walks, the country life of Hernhurst, as



handsome Hilda had fitted into the glare of a tropical sun, the glitter of an Indian moon, and the scent of the tuber-roses on the terrace of Government House, and the scarlet dye of the rhododendrons on the mountain slopes of the Himalayas.

But Effie vanished. P. and O. steamers wait for no man. Harry's leg got well, his leave waned, and his colonel grew anxious. Likewise Hilda wrote that, if he returned by a certain date, they could finish their honeymoon in time to get back to Naini Tal from the remote *dâk bungalows* (or rest-houses) in the mountains, affected by Anglo-Indian bridal couples, for the civil and military ball which wound up the season in that frivolous nook.

Harry Hernhurst winged south with the swallows, but in a more prosaic manner. Jolted like a pill in a pill-box, he gained Brindisi with the mail-bags. Thence to Alexandria, over the choppy Mediterranean. Another jolt, through Egypt this



time, with a plague of flies and of dust. At last, Suez and the Red Sea, and, in the latter, the P. and O. mail steamer from London, awaiting the mails and the overland passengers.

Was it chance, or luck, or fate, or an evil genius? Among the passengers who had come round by the Bay of Biscay in the *Pekin* was Effie Grimdale.

To her, Harry Hernhurst seemed like an old friend, bringing with him a whiff of the English home life she had left behind her. All her shyness vanished, and she clung to him—metaphorically, of course. It is easy to be great friends on board ship. Of course, Hernhurst was engaged, so it was all right. If he had not been engaged——

There are some things the bravest man cannot trust himself to think about. Hernhurst had faced a wounded bear, a charging tiger, but as he sat on deck on moonlight nights in the Indian Ocean and



looked into the sweet eyes of the girl beside him—*that* was a question he dared not ask himself.

There was a letter awaiting him at Bombay from Hilda. She had collected her bridesmaids; the lieutenant-governor would come to the wedding.

As he read it, Hernhurst involuntarily groaned aloud.

He was still on board the *Pekin*, now safely anchored in Bombay Harbour. The quarantine officers had just finished their inspection; the mails were off, and in a few more moments the passengers would be free to land and go their divers ways.

Hernhurst was standing on deck, looking out towards the island of Elephanta and the blue ghauts on the horizon with eyes that saw nothing. On a seat beside him sat Effie Grimdale, also perusing her letters. It was the sound of something like a sob coming from under her hat which roused him.



‘Effie,’ (he had got into the way on board ship of calling her Effie—because his sisters had done so at home, perhaps,) ‘What’s the matter? No bad news, I hope?’ he asked, dropping down by her side.

‘Oh, no!’ (sob) ‘only I feel so strange—so lonely! Papa can’t meet me. He’s shooting in the hills. I’m to go up to Naini Tal with Mrs. Smith, and meet him there—oh! I—I——’

Two big tears rolled slowly and childishly down Effie’s face.

Hernhurst drew closer.

‘Dear little child! Don’t cry, don’t! What is it? What can I do?’

‘Oh, I’m very silly,’ (with a determined brushing away of the tell-tale tears). ‘I don’t like leaving the ship—it’s a link with home—or—or——’

‘Leaving me? Say, you don’t like leaving me?’

The words slipped from his tongue. He



but half murmured them, and in so low a tone that he could not feel sure she heard them, for just then his eye fell upon the letter he still held in his hand. Then came a faint breath of perfume. (Hilda always wrote on scented paper.) A big 'Hilda' in a bold scrawling hand, emblazoned on the corner of the note-paper, caught his eye.

Without another word he got up and walked to the other side of the deck, and hailed a boat to take him ashore.

It was the most unusual season that had ever been known at Naini Tal. By September the rains are supposed to have ceased, the hot weather to be over, and life to become once more enjoyable in that earthly paradise. But this year the weather was most unpleasant. There had been three days of almost incessant rain. Inches had fallen; the valleys were a swamp; the steep mountain-paths cata-



racts, and the lake a bumper; and at such an unlucky time, too! There was so much going on: polo-matches, cricket-matches, dances, theatricals, and last, but not least, Miss Hayes' wedding, which was to be a very grand affair indeed.

So they told Effie Grimdale, as she came up from the plains with her chaperone, Mrs. Smith, and proceeded to the Victoria Hotel to await her father's return.

'Such a lovely bride!' they added, and Effie agreed with them. For she met Miss Hayes and her *fiancé* cantering down the Mall one evening.

'And such a good-looking fellow, and charming,' they went on, in the way people will.

But Effie did not look at him, and Hernhurst raised his hat to her, almost without seeing her.

'Who's that new girl?' asked Hilda.  
'Rather a pretty little thing!'

But Hernhurst was stooping to do some-



thing to a strap on his pony's bridle and did not answer.

The next day the rain was descending again when Hernhurst woke up in the morning. He was staying at the club, and when he went in to breakfast, a confused murmur of alarming news struck upon him.

'There has been a landslip in the early morning,' said one. 'The mountain-side was evidently loosened by the rain. Some servants' huts had been buried, and probably some of their inmates. They were digging—soldiers, coolies.'

'Whereabouts?' asked another, and Harry Hernhurst paused in cutting his egg to listen for the reply.

'Behind the "Victoria." In fact, the engineer says all that hill-side is unsafe,' some one went on.

'The "Victoria" people ought to move out at once,' began a third; but Hernhurst heard no more.



He had left the room and the club. He called for his pony, so runs his groom's tale, in a very excited manner, bidding the latter hurry. Then he rode up the steep mountain-side to where the Victoria Hotel stood, perched on a terrace under the precipice.

'The *sahib* was in such a hurry he rode off without his hat,' his bearer declared later.

That was the last that was ever seen of him, though they found the grey pony grazing quietly further along the hill-side.

For the great landslip came—silently, suddenly, as a thief in the night, upon the devoted valley. It thrilled all India, and even far-away England. No human eye saw exactly what happened. There was a vast cloud of dust which enwrapped all the hill-side.

When it cleared away there was a great naked scar on the mountain, and the Victoria Hotel had vanished; also the shops



and the Hindoo temple below—and the rubble choked up the head of the lake.

It was all over in a moment. And then a great horror took possession of frivolous Naini Tal. Was it to be Sodom or Gomorrah over again? There was a stampede out of the lovely valley, which each precipice seemed to threaten, and though the sun shone out, and the rain rolled away towards the snows, there was a fight for *dâk gharries* (post chaises) to carry people down back to the plains.

Among the first to bolt were Hilda Hayes and her father. Her nerves had been quite shaken by Harry Hernhurst's mysterious disappearance.

And yet, after all, so few people perished in that landslip—buried beneath mountains of shell and rubble, in nameless graves—just a few natives, who did not count, of course, and a Mrs. Smith and a girl with her, new-comers, whom no one knew—and Harry Hernhurst.



The two ladies had no friends, and probably were unaware of their danger, and did not attempt to escape till too late.

But Hernhurst, what was he doing there?



### MY FIRST DUEL.

THE scene was in Guramghur, Bengal; the period, about the time when O'Connell was leading the government a dance in Ireland, when Poland was being chawed up, and the *bourgeois* king clambering on to that shaky edifice, the French throne. In India, as yet, no English bones had whitened the Afghan deserts, the British dominions in our great dependency did not include Scinde, while the Lion of the Punjaub reigned supreme at Lahore.

The hero, myself, Charley O'Keelan, of Ballybothrem, County Cork, an ensign (they were not extinct then) in His Majesty's 160th Scilly Islanders, who had



but lately joined after a six months' monotonous voyage round the Cape, and a weary journey up the Ganges in a boat, culminating in a jolting across what appeared to my inexperienced eyes a pathless desert, in a *palki* to Guramghur.

They were glorious days those, those first few months when my soldiering began. What matter that the thermometer stood at anything you like in the shade, we had very few thermometers to register it by, and no Meteorological Society at Simla to print alarming three figures in the daily paper. By-the-by, we had no daily paper. It ran across in a *banghy-dâk*—basket on a pole on men's shoulders—from Huddabad, and was days old when it came. We had English papers, of course, at intermittent intervals, by the same means, containing fine old crusted news of six months ago. Thrones might totter and fall in far-away Europe, and monarchs snuff out in England; only dis-



tant echoes of it all reached us at Guramghur. We soon became far more interested in the daily *gup* of the messes, in the well-embroidered stories of Brown's doings and the colonel's sayings. Of sport there was plenty, of course. Did not the wily boar rootle up our compounds in the night, the noble tiger stalk in jungles within a stone's throw, and the half-starved wolf on a foggy night in the cold weather carry off a child from the servants' houses. There was plenty to be slain, but our sporting instincts were not keenly developed in those days of muzzle-loaders. Pig-sticking was not raised to a fine art, polo and tennis were unknown, the Indian *tât* had not as yet been developed for British use, and still was merely a beast of burden. Of society there was absolutely none. Three ladies shed the light of their fair faces on Guramghur. Two, the wives respectively of the colonel of native infantry and of the magistrate,



had more than a touch of the tar brush about them. The third, the wife of our colonel, had come out to him from home on the strength of the interchange of *silhouettes*, (photographs were not,) and the match had not turned out harmoniously. In fact, their periodical bickerings were a little excitement we learned to look forward to with zest in default of other amusements.

For life at Guramghur was quiescent. We were as untroubled by flights to the hills and to Cashmere as by bills weekly from home. We worried ourselves as little about ice, or soda-water, or therm-antidotes, or white helmets, as about camps of exercise, little wars, or race-meetings three or four hundred miles off. We had plenty of English bottled beer and of brandy, and we thought little about the sun, or the heat, or of taking exercise, or of our livers.

The consequence was that I had not



joined ten weeks before I rose, through death-vacancies, to be a lieutenant. For, of course, in default of anything to do, we drank. Ah, those heavy nights at mess! Even now I look back upon them with wonder. It was a marvel any of us survived to tell the tale, as we sat there at the drinking bouts far into the sultry nights. I, being young and stalwart, and gifted with a head somewhat beyond my years, was wont to assist in conveying to their respective bungalows the insensible forms of brother-officers who lay strewn under the table. It was a case of the survival of the fittest. Those of us who passed through this training unscathed were the men who conquered at Chillianwallah, Ferozeshah, Ghuznee, Lucknow, and Delhi.

And then we quarrelled, too! The malevolent individual who is currently reported to find occupation for the great unemployed must have chuckled as he



looked down on some big guest-night at Guramghur. To the native cavalry mess, indeed, few quieter spirits ever accepted an invitation, so pugilistic was the atmosphere there. Had not young Bridoon lain for weeks with a bullet in his chest, the effects of which he was likely to carry with him all his days, merely because he had brushed against de Bounceby in the verandah, and the latter, being none too steady on his legs, had tumbled backwards down the steps, and vowed that Bridoon had knocked him down.

Duels were of such frequent occurrence that they might be looked upon as safety-valves for our bottled-up energies, which, in more sensible days, would have found vent upon the race-course, the polo-field, or in pig-sticking. Our encounters cannot even be credited with having improved our marksmanship, for the practice was to fire very quickly the three recognised shots, and if anyone was hit it was more



by luck than skill. Such, however, was the code of honour of the period.

My great chum was Terence Lanyon. We had been at school together, and when staying with him one holiday I had made the acquaintance of his sister Norah. But of this more anon. Away in Guramghur, as full-grown soldiers, the school days seemed a century ago, but our friendship was rivetted all the closer by mutual memories of the 'ould counthree.' We were inseparable; we bought horses together, shot partridges together; and shared the same washerman. How very much the worse it was for us, then, to fall out and fight, and all about nothing at all! If at this distance of time I could give you an account of what led up to this deadly quarrel, I would gladly do so. But, as I had but the haziest notion at the very moment, it is utterly impossible now.

It was something about the Archbishop



of Canterbury—that much I remember. Why this worthy prelate should have cropped up in the edifying conversation that was apt to flow around the mess-plate of the Scilly Islanders about twelve o'clock on a grilling night, I am utterly unable to say. Neither myself, a good son of the Roman Church, nor Terence, who acknowledged a Protestant archbishop's supremacy, had even so much as clapped eyes on him. In fact, to both our minds he was enveloped in a good deal of mystery. However, I fancy that I had hiccoughed out something to his disparagement, and that Lanyon, needing only some small opposition or incitement, took up the remark and shook it fiercely, as a terrier does a rat, from the mere love of contradiction. But really the whole affair was terribly vague. The witnesses, a few minutes afterwards, either dropped asleep, or sank under the table ; and Lanyon, choking and gurgling in his wrath and his tight stock,



till I thought he would have a fit, hurled a challenge at me across the silver, and then disappeared below the horizon of the mahogany.

One thing was indisputable—Lanyon had called me out. If there was any doubt about the matter it was set at rest by the doctor's last words as he left the mess, 'Good night, ol' fell'! Better shend and call me when you shtart 'morrow mornin', always come in handy, donyeno.'

Major Firebrace picked up Terence, and had him taken away. Then he called to me. Firebrace was a sort of perpetual acting second to anyone who could not, or would not get one. He enjoyed it thoroughly, and, if you got him in a confidential mood, would pour forth most bloodthirsty stories of the encounters he had been the means of arranging. It seemed like real business when he remarked calmly, as if he had been arranging a (game) shooting-party,



‘Send someone over to me to settle the time, O’Keelan. Pistols, I suppose?’ (We were neither of us through sword drill yet.) ‘You’d better go to bed and get your hand steady.’

The night air, though anything but cool, refreshed me as I walked across to my bungalow. I went straight to my bathroom and poured a pitcher of cold water over my head, then I seemed myself again. The furniture ceased jumping about, and I sat down on the edge of my bed to reflect.

The business was serious enough. Terence had been very angry, though we neither of us knew quite why or wherefore. He was a fairly good shot (how often had not we walked the stubbles together!) and I was a prodigious mark. It was quite on the cards the affair might end fatally—such affairs often did. It was well to be prepared for the worst. I felt I ought to sit down and write a farewell



letter—people always did. I had no one nearer to write to than an uncle who managed for me the few acres of my bog, which, in the event of my decease, would pass to my small brother. No, a letter of farewell was unnecessary.

Then I had read of people—condemned criminals and the like—spending their last hours in burning other people's letters. I could certainly do that, for I had no wish that Norah's letters, so precious in my eyes, should become the laughing-stock of the mess, so I hastily opened the holiest of holies in which they reposed—an old cigar-box. There were only two. The first ran, in a neat Italian hand:—

‘MY DEAR SIR,

‘My mother, who is unfortunately indisposed, desires me to convey her compliments to you, and expresses the hope that you will find it convenient to come over to shoot with my brother on



Thursday, and will honour us with staying to supper. Believe me, my dear sir,

‘Yours very truly,

‘NORAH LANYON.’

The second was not like unto it.

‘DEAREST CHARLEY,

‘Here’s the lock of hair.

Now don’t you be after telling of me. I am that sorry your orders have come.

‘Yours as ever,

‘NORAH.’

As I read and re-read these priceless documents, my conduct began slowly to assume an enormity in my eyes such as it had not possessed before. To shoot her brother—good God! What would Norah have said if she had known that I was sitting there, in cold blood, calmly contemplating shooting her brother? Her sweet little face seemed to hover before me, and, as I kissed again the lock of hair tied up



with a blue ribbon, it seemed to come back again to me over leagues of sea and land. The barn-like, whitewashed bungalow, the swinging punkah, the whirr of the crickets in the sultry night without, where the distant howl of a jackal alone broke the silence—all vanished, and in its place came the ‘ould counthree,’ and the seat in the shrubbery where I had first kissed Norah.

She signed herself ‘yours as ever.’ What would she do if she heard Terence had shot *me*?

A revulsion of feeling came over me. Rushing out of my bungalow, I tore across the road to Terence’s, and burst into his room.

‘Terence, old man! Faith, an’ I’ve been an ass!’

Terence was sitting in a state of nature in his bath, his bearer douching him with cold water to restore his scattered senses, for *reveillé* had already sounded through



the darkness, and it would soon be time to turn out to parade in the brief cool interval of the grey dawn.

He held out a wet paw with effusion.

‘Begorra, O’Keelan, an’ I was just afther thinking I’d been the same!’

In after years how often we have made Norah laugh with the story of our duel—that was to be!



### THE GENERAL'S GLASS EYE.

'I'LL lay you a fiver on the General,' quoth Cis Sabretasche of the Crimson Cuirassiers.

'And I one on the A.D.C.,' rejoined Frank Fewse of the Horse Gunners, and the two fat Maltese cigarettes went back again under the two moustaches, and the warriors relapsed into silence.

It was the period of the first British occupation of Cairo, not many months after the daring little band of cavalry had taken the citadel without firing a shot, so impressed were the inhabitants with Arabi's licking at Tel-el-Kebir, many miles away in the desert. But war, and even the



rumour of war, has ceased to resound in the land of the Pharoahs, and in its stead came a sound as of many tourists, while Tommy Atkins loafed at his ease through the bazaars. There was merry-making at the Abdin Palace, and hardly a room to be had at Shepherd's, while the native washer-folk charged a shilling apiece per pocket-handkerchief. Cook's steam-launches were running down the Suez Canal, paying flying visits to scenes of bloodshed, and his dahabeahs once more winged up the Nile, where, not many months hence, British soldiers were to toil patiently at the oars, and down which Gordon was to look vainly for succour.

But Sabretasche and Frank Fewse sat in the wide stone balcony of Shepherd's hotel in long lounging chairs, such as are only to be found in sunny climes, and gossipped about the crowd that passed below them. They were still in uniform, and a shade dusty, not being long from parade in the



square, and were reposing themselves with cigarettes and whisky and sodas prior to undergoing the exertion of tubbing and dressing for polo. The smart world of Shepherd's, which comprised a smattering of all nations, but chiefly English and Americans, were returning from the accustomed morning amusement of pretending to shop in the fascinating bazaars.

Among the motley crowd of donkeys, camels, carriages, Jews, Turks, Arabs and Greeks, dogs, oranges, sugar-cane, and rattling brass water-cans, a soldierly-looking man of a little more than middle age was to be seen helping a lady to alight from her donkey at the hotel steps. She was a dainty little person, whose sharp delicate features, tiny hands and feet, and exquisite figure, complexion, and toilet at once pronounced her from over the Atlantic. No Englishwoman could have put on her clothes so well, no Frenchwoman have been so pretty.



Her companion looked down upon her with evident admiration from under his thick and somewhat grizzled eyebrows, and made some pretty speech, which caused her to look up and show her beautiful teeth.

‘Jove! what points those Yankee women have,’ quoth Sabretasche from aloft.

‘Too fine-bred, don’t stay, you know,’ muttered his companion.

As he spoke there was a clank of a sword and spurs down the steps underneath, and Charlie Clarke, as dapper a little A.D.C. as ever donned a cocked hat, advanced to assist his chief in his delightful employment, and took the lady’s parasol from her with two words and a laugh which made her turn and smile at *him*.

Then it was that the two onlookers in the balcony above made the above-mentioned bet.

The Egyptian war had done Major-General the Honourable Stacy Wymerell



a good turn. He was a fine soldier, and, what was better, had the luck to be in the right place at the right time, and to do the right thing. In consequence he had got a good appointment and promotion—everything, in fact, he could get.

Everything? No, not quite, for he fancied he wanted little Mrs. Silas M. Soakes for his wife, and he had not got her—yet.

Mrs. Soakes had come to Cairo that winter, instead of Nice or Rome, and was enjoying herself hugely. Women were in the minority that year in the capital of the Khedive, and Mrs. Soakes was having what she called a good time. She had been just long enough a widow to thoroughly appreciate her liberty. Her brief period of captivity under the sway of the late Mr. Silas M. Soakes was rapidly becoming a bad dream, and the distance that lends enchantment to the view was colouring gaily the prospect of re-marriage in the



future. For Mrs. Soakes had quite decided before she had been many weeks in Cairo that she *was* going to marry again, only she could not make up her mind who.

General Wymerell was delightful, with the charm of a man who had lived long enough to study the art of being so. He was very fine-looking, especially in uniform, towering above the common herd. The iron-grey of his hair and moustache was most becoming, and it was very pleasing to Mrs. Soakes's vanity to reduce such a great man from his usual tone of authority to one of abject humility. She loved to make the general lower his flag. When you add to all this that he was the heir to a wealthy title, it will be seen how great his attractions were. What American woman can withstand a lord?

On the other hand, his little A.D.C., Charlie Clarke, unblessed by birth, by money, or position, had cultivated the art of quiet 'cheek,' till he was perfectly irre-



sistible. There was nothing he would not say, all in the quietest manner, without moving a muscle. He would draw Mrs. Soakes, who was a tremendous talker, into all sorts of misguided statements, and then laugh at her. At one moment she felt she almost hated him ; at the next, that no one approached him. One mocking glance of Charlie's eyes was worth more to her than a dozen sighs and languishes from her love-sick giant. Charlie she did not quite understand ; he *piqued* her, excited her feminine curiosity. The general she read like a book. No wonder the betting was equal.

Master Charlie, however, though not showing his hand or appearing to care, had thoroughly made up his mind that Silas M. Soakes's little widow and her dollars, which were quite worthy the attention of a penniless captain, should be his before the winter was over. But there was the Chief in the way. Charlie, how-



ever, had set what Uncle Remus calls 'his thinkin' masheen a wukken,' and fancied that he had bowled his rival.

Now Major-General the Honourable Stacy Wymerell was a mighty man of valour in the British army, but (unknown to the world at large and Mrs. Soakes in particular) he had a glass eye. A glass eye?—he must have had a dozen. To replace the optic honourably lost in the pursuit of game on a Highland moor, he had a variety of artificial ones. There was a small pupil for a glary day: a large pupil for a dull day; a commanding eye for a parade, flashing with an awe-inspiring glare that was perfectly crushing, a jovial, rollicking eye for a cheery mess dinner, and a languishing, ogling eye for a ball, expressing all sorts of tender things. And his A.D.C., who had shared his cabin on board ship and his tent on service, was in the secret of all these eyes, and knew where he kept the box.



Matters were rapidly coming to a climax. On Fridays and Saturdays Mrs. Soakes would drive with the general in his smart, mail phaeton down the long Shoubra Road shaded with old overhanging trees, through which, here and there, they caught a peep of the Mocaddan hills, red and golden in the evening sunlight, and crowned with the needle-like minarets of the Citadel Mosque, so slender and tall that they rock to and fro in the wind. The beauty of the evening and of the scene made Wymerell sentimental, and from discussing the gold of the sunset he turned to the gold of his companion's pretty hair.

But madam would not allow him to tread on such dangerous ground. She turned him off by the surest way she knew of, namely, by bringing his rival on the *tapis*.

'Talking of hair, gen'ral, reminds me of eyes——'



The general started, winced, and tried to turn the subject.

‘Do you see that gap in the Mocaddan hills, Mrs. Soakes? There are such pretty rides through there out into the plain beyond. If you’ll let me take you out one morning, on my new Arab——’

‘I said, talking of eyes, gen’ral,’ persisted the widow; ‘has it ever struck you what lovely lashes Charlie Clarke has? Many a woman might be proud of them. I reckon it’s that gives his eyes such a lovely *expression*.’

She had shot an arrow at a venture, and had struck deeper than she was aware. The general snorted, and flicked his horses viciously, and the widow felt she had him well in hand again. He was flattered, grateful, and appeased when she asked him, as they drove up to the hotel,

‘Do you think you could spare time to take me into the bazaar again to-morrow morning? I must go and beat Haroun Ras



down a little more about that lovely old Damascus bowl, though I guess I mean to have it in the end, cost what it may.'

'My dear lady, I'm at your service, as always. I can easily put myself off a parade that was in orders ; Colonel Senior's always only too delighted to take my place. But how you can have the face to haunt Haroun Ras's little shop as you do, and sit on his straw chair (which you've nearly worn out, by-the-bye), and drink his coffee, and bargain for bric-à-brac and embroideries you never buy, passes my——'

'I'm vurry sorry,' retorted Mrs. Soakes, with a toss of her little head. 'But there are other people who think I've the *face* for anything. I'm sorry it doesn't please *you*. However, I'll forgive you, and say to you, as Haroun Ras does, "Come to-morrow."'

And he went—like a lamb.

In the afternoon Mrs. Soakes drove alone across the iron bridge over the river to the polo and tennis grounds, and watched a



polo match between cavalry and gunners in which Sabretasche and Fewse excelled themselves. When the game was over, Charlie Clarke came in boots and gay jersey and stood by her carriage.

‘Captain Clarke, will you do something for me?’

He hesitated.

‘That depends if it’s good for you, madam.’

‘That’s not your *concern*, I guess. I want to go right up atop of the *Citadel* to see the sunset. Will you take me to-morrow evening?’

‘Let me see. I half promised to give Sabretasche’s horse a gallop. I’m riding her in the Sky races——’

‘But surely I’m more value than many horses, Captain Clarke? Now, do be nice and say you will,’ cajoled the little widow.

He gave her a mock parental look.

‘Say “please,” then?’



She pouted, and then laughed.

‘Well, *please*, then.’

It is one of the most glorious views in the world that the pair looked upon as they leant over the parapet at sunset. The great city below was a gorgeous mass of colour, red, yellow, pink, soft lights and glowing haze. Beyond, the wide desert, through which the Nile flowed in hushed silence, a narrow strip of bright emerald green on either side, palms, and the far-distant pyramids standing out clear against the changing sky.

The scene was not without its effect on even the cynical Charlie. Never before had he felt so strongly inclined to put the fatal question to Mrs. Soakes. If only he had felt more sure of her; if only he had been convinced the fruit was ripe for picking!

Something in his manner warned his companion of danger, perhaps the long-lashed eyes looked more fascinating than usual.



Anyhow she began, with more than the usual abruptness and conciseness of her race :

‘ Captain Clarke, perhaps you can inform me, has General Wymerell a very bad temper ?’

‘ Awful,’ said Charlie, unblushingly. ‘ But why do you ask ?’

‘ Because sometimes there’s a glare about his eyes quite scares me. He looked fiendish the other morning at the march past in the square, all about nothing at all, and yet, sometimes, his expression is quite remarkably pleasant.’

A leaden weight seemed to fall from Charlie’s heart.

‘ By George !’ he said to himself, with inward exultation, ‘ she’s noticed the fierce glass eye. That glass eye’s my salvation, and shall land me a winner, or I’ll eat my hat.’

But he only remarked aloud,

‘ You’re quite right, for once, in your



intuitive perception, madam. An eye is a sure index to the temper. You watch the general narrowly to-night, and see if your surmises are right.'

For that night the Khedive was to give a big ball at the Abdin Palace, and Charley had overheard the general say, half to himself, when he got a little note at breakfast from Mrs. Soakes, allotting him more than his fair share of dances :

'By Jove, I'm a coward, that's what I am. Why don't I go in and win? Faint heart never won, etc. Hang me, if I let it go on any longer.'

'Soho!' thought Charlie to himself. 'It's come to that, has it? Well, all's fair in love and war! It's a case of pull general, pull A.D.C!'

Let us hope it was duty led Charlie Clarke to the general's room that evening, about dressing-time. But the general had not returned, he was late, and the soldier-servant was lying in wait for him in the



passage. The General's full-dress uniform, a glory of scarlet and gold, was laid out on chairs, clean shirt, wellingtons, and on the dressing-table a trophy of hair brushes and razors, and last, but not least, a little box.

Let us hope it was idle curiosity caused the A.D.C. to open the said little box and finger its contents. Something dropped lightly on the floor ; perhaps it was a button, a stud.

Let us hope it was sheer accident caused Clarke to tread upon it and grind it to powder under his heel.

The general returned in hot haste, very late, having been detained by official business, and very flurried, for he had made up his mind to propose to Mrs. Soakes at the ball that night, and, never having done such a thing in his life before, felt more and more nervous as the time approached. He hastily summoned his servant, who began to array him hurriedly.



‘Carriage waitin’, sar,’ said the Levantine waiter at the door.

‘Hang it! what’s the time, O’Flanagan?’

‘Five minutes to eight, sir.’

‘And these people dine at eight o’clock,’ muttered the general, brushing his hair wildly. ‘Quick, O’Flanagan,—my eye.’

‘And the which, sur?’ asked the servant, who had been with him some years.

‘The ball eye, you dolt. Can’t find it? What a nuisance! Well, I can’t wait now; look for it and bring it me to Colonel Senior’s, where I’m dining. I’m going on to the ball from there.’

General Wymerell was very late for dinner, and his hostess, a meek woman, quaked over her menu and wondered what could have put him out and made him glare so. His equanimity was not restored by a message brought to him at dessert.

‘Beg your pardon, sir, but your servant has come to say he can’t find it anywhere.’



‘ Oh ! let him go to the——’ ejaculated the officer.

The Abdin Palace, a long low white building facing the big square, was a blaze of lights as Mrs. Soakes drove up to the Khedive’s ball. She felt with her woman’s intuition that she could no longer keep Wymerell at bay, and that that evening they must come to an understanding.

‘ I’ll watch him narrowly to-night,’ she said to herself, ‘ as Charlie suggested ; and if he looks very bad-tempered, I’ll just right have done with him.’

Innumerable officials thronged the entrance, and conducted Mrs. Soakes through endless suites of apartments, gaudily furnished in the French style, in vivid blues and reds and greens, with masses of gold tinsel, and many looking-glasses, to the presence of His Highness himself, who received his guests standing and wearing the fez. Then the fair American was pounced upon by a swarm of admirers,



and the few dances on her card not already appropriated were speedily taken. But what made little Mrs. Soakes standing there so *chic* and pretty, with the diamonds sparkling on her white neck, turn pale underneath the little *soupeçon* of rouge she always wore in the evening?

Standing in an opposite doorway, devouring her with his eyes, stood Wymerell; and oh! horror, he had on exactly the same expression which had alarmed her so at the review. Slowly, determinedly, he advanced and bore down upon her, like a fierce hawk upon a defenceless little white chicken. The stern, fixed glare of his eye seemed to fill the room, to concentrate itself upon her and scorch her very soul. Terror even altered his voice in her ears, as in tones hoarse with suppressed passion he said,

‘I am come to claim my first waltz.’

She shuddered. Thus, if she delivered herself over into his hands, would he claim



her soul and body for evermore, like a horrible ogre demanding his victim? In her despair she turned to Charlie, who, noticing her look, pressed towards her.

‘You are mistaken, general. This is Captain Clarke’s dance.’

Her high-pitched American voice rang clear around, and everybody within hearing knew that she had thrown the general over. The next minute she was whirling away in Clarke’s arms.

It was but a turn, and then he led her away into a quiet dim corner. Her bosom heaved with excitement.

‘I couldn’t help saying it; but he looked in such a terrible rage, he quite frightened me. He’ll never forgive me; he knew it was a lie, but I never want to speak to him again, now I’ve seen him with the mask off. But you,’ (in an altered tone), ‘you didn’t mind my making use of you?’

‘Mind? You dear little woman! I’m



so glad!' and, without a prick of conscience, the hardened sinner caught her in his arms and kissed her.

He lived long and happily afterwards to enjoy the fruit of his wickedness.



## THE SINCEREST FLATTERY.

THE whole British army did not contain a more ridiculously happy couple than Captain and Mrs. Grey. They had now been married nearly three whole months, and in Evie's eyes Charley was the very perfection of a smart good-looking soldier, made to be worshipped when arrayed in all his gaudia of scarlet and gold, a young demi-god. On the other hand, Charley's every look and word expressed his deep conviction that pretty Evie was the very perfection of little wives. To hear his comments on matrimony in general, and in particular, to see him doing the honours



of his little furnished house, crammed with brand-new useless wedding-presents, to hear him abusing mess-life to a former bachelor friend, you would never have imagined that Captain Grey had been one of the most popular men at a mess-table.

As for Evie, she had taken the scarlet fever irrevocably and completely. To hear her little soldierly, and often erroneous, epithets and slang, you would have imagined she had always been brought up in the barrack-square, or within sound of the bugle-call, instead of in the sequestered ruralism of a country vicarage.

The Greys were quartered at Whitecliffe. The society of that watering-place is extremely military, and abhors dulness as it does the plague. It is not particularly fastidious in its search for amusement. But the Greys were far too much in love with each other to be much affected by their surroundings, and the madding crowd left them very much to themselves. For



who are so uninteresting as a pair of very married lovers !

The nest of these turtle-doves was a little furnished house on the Marine Parade, whence, at the receipt of marching orders, they could spread their wings and fly off to other quarters, in the usual exceedingly limited lapse of time allowed by the Horse Guards authorities. The *ménage* was 'mounted,' as the French say, by two servants, one Captain Grey's *bâtman*, a soldier of his regiment, MacClaughlan by name, and the other a very dragon of a widow cook, of uncertain age and temper, but about whose lack of personal charms there could be no doubt at all.

MacClaughlan, after the manner of officers' servants, was as convertible as a piece of portable barrack furniture, which is a sofa or arm-chair by day, a bed by night. In the morning he turned up from barracks, and, taking possession of his master's dressing-room, performed



therein, with the accompaniment of much whistling, and even, occasionally, snatches of song, sundry mysteries connected with pipe-clay and blacking. He would then bring the breakfast into the dining-room, walking with a tread heavy with ammunition boots, and clad in a cast-off suit of check dittos of his master's. The cut of the latter's hair, and the curl of the latter's moustache, he endeavoured strenuously to imitate, as far as in him lay.

In the afternoon, and for dinner, Mac-Claughlan donned an old dress-suit of Captain Grey's, and waited with a precision which would have done honour to the professional greengrocer. Indeed, but for his moustache, you might have mistaken him for the latter functionary, when he did not speak. On such occasion his speech betrayed him ; as, for instance, when asked what dish he was proffering, he exclaimed :

‘ Shure ! blessed if I knows, sur ! ’

The first parting is always bitter, though



the saying of good-bye, like prime October, mellows with time. Evie positively cried her eyes out when her Charley broke to her that he was ordered away on a general court-martial at Idleminster for three whole days. How those three days passed she never quite knew. She tried to read a novel. But what story was now so interesting as that of her love, what hero could compete in attractions with her Charley! She wrote a long letter to her dearest school-friend, full of Charley, which bored the recipient—who was not the happy possessor of such a treasure—very considerably. She tried to housekeep a little, but that the dragon of a cook sternly refused to allow it; and very wisely, too, as her mistress knew nothing at all about it. She even went so far as to sally out with a little bag laden with small red leather volumes, and embark on that mysterious domestic operation known as ‘paying the books.’ But she quailed before



the tradespeople, and finally desisted. But for fear of MacClaughlan, who had asked for a holiday, she would have liked to tidy her husband's things. But she dared not interfere with the servants' vested rights.

Finally, however, the weary time of waiting came to an end, and joyfully Evie decided to go down and meet her Charley at the 6.30 train. The evening was chilly, the thoughtful little wife looked for his overcoat to take down for him. She was pleased not to find it. It showed that her injunctions were beginning to be felt, and that Charley had begun to take care of himself.

The crowd at the station somewhat damped her ardour. She might miss him in the throng when the train came in. She decided it would be best to take up a position on the bridge crossing the line, whence she could command a view of the passengers.

Evie's heart went pit-a-pat as the whistle



shrieked and the train, panting into the station, disgorged its contents. Another moment and her face flushed crimson with joy, as she peered anxiously over the railing down on to the crowd on the platform.

No; there was no mistaking that manly figure, erect and soldierlike, albeit clad in dittos and a light overcoat, and swinging a cane. It was getting dusk, but Evie felt she would have known him amongst thousands!

But ah! what is the sudden sight that stays her feet about to fly down the steps to meet him, and causes the poor little girl to clap her hand to her side with a sudden stab of pain?

A second figure joins the first, and a female one! Such a figure, too, clad in the loudest of draggled costumes, and wearing the fluffiest of heavy black fringes. And she links her arm affectionately in his, and leers up into his face and laughs.

How poor Evie got home she never



knew. She did so, however, and on the hall-table found a telegram awaiting her.

*'From Captain Grey to Mrs. Grey. Detained. Do not wait dinner.'*

Detained! Of course he was; had she not seen him detained with her own eyes! and by whom?

Evie sent dinner down again untasted, and lay crying on the drawing-room sofa in an agony of despair, till, like the child she was, she sobbed herself to sleep.

Some time later, the fire was burning low in the drawing-room, when the sound of a manly footstep in the hall below awoke her with a sudden start. Only half awake, and forgetful of aught else save that Charley had returned, she flew to the door, and down the stairs.

Under the dimly burning hall-lamp stood the well-known tall figure in the checks, endeavouring to hang up the light overcoat on its accustomed peg.



Evie darted forward with a cry and outstretched arms. The figure turned round and revealed MacClaughlan's face somewhat flushed. He straightened himself, as if with difficulty, to attention.

'Beg pardin', mum, but I come to shee ash if sh' cap'n wash come home.'

As he spoke there was a thundering peal at the front-door bell. Half dazed, Evie walked to it, and opened it herself, to find herself in her husband's arms.

The next evening, after dinner, when Evie occupied her accustomed seat on the hearthrug, with her little head leant back against Charley's knee, she asked, somewhat constrainedly, as she touched his coat-sleeve,

'I say, Charley darling, why don't you wear that nice check suit you used to?'

'That check suit? Oh! I've cast that—gave it to MacClaughlan; it was awfully old, you know—had it before we married. By-the-by, Evie,' he added, 'I think I



must give MacClaughlan the sack, too. He was drunk again last night, and I hear he's been seen going about in my overcoat, and I'm sure he's either lost or appropriated my best stick—yes, I'll send him back to duty.'

Evie was very glad to hear it.



## AN EGYPTIAN MYSTERY.

‘THAT was a sad business about poor Butley Dene, wasn’t it?’

The speaker was Meridon, late colonel of the Crimson Cuirassiers, and his remark was addressed to Dolly Denver, one of the junior captains of that distinguished corps.

The latter was home from India; for, alas! the Crimsons had taken themselves and their attractions to the burning East, far away from the Hurlingham polo-ground and the Brighton ball-rooms which they had so much honoured with their presence. But, intermediately, they had done a little campaigning in Egypt; not



too much war, but just war enough—to get them a medal.

Meridon's command had expired just before the Egyptian business, and he was now only too delighted to welcome Denver—the first swallow of the spring flight home on leave of the Crimsons—down to his place in Northamptonshire for a few days of the last of the hunting, that he might hear all the news about the old corps.

Of course there was plenty to tell. Who was dead, or had left, or had married; who had come into money, or to grief; where Smith was now, what Jones was doing. Then they touched on Egypt, and Meridon remarked how sad it had been about Butley Dene, poor chap!

Butley Dene had been a major in the Crimsons, the handsomest and smartest man in the regiment.

‘Yes,’ replied Dolly, ‘and a very curious thing, too! He was potted at one



night going round the guards at El Kashab, and shot dead. So was his orderly who was following him. They weren't found till morning.'

'Just like those skulking Arabs!' quoth the colonel. 'Give me a civilized enemy, by Jove!'

'The pickets were out directly the shots were heard, but they never nabbed any-one. They're like cats, these Arabs! But the odd thing was that poor old Butley was hit through the back and the orderly through the heart. So there must have been two on the watch for them. Young Baverstock got Butley's troop; you remember him, colonel?'

And so the conversation flowed on for some time. The men were sitting smoking in Meridon's den. Presently, when the latter showed signs of dozing in his huge leather arm-chair, Dolly Denver took up the *Morning Post* of the day and ran his eye over it idly. The next minute an



exclamation and a low whistle from Dolly roused the colonel.

‘By George!’ said Dolly.

‘What is it?’ asked Meridon, blinking.

‘Why, it’s really come off. Little Mrs. Roysdean’s been and got Lord Dunderton to marry her!’

‘Little devil!’ growled Meridon. ‘And he’s a consummate ass. Always thought so.’

‘Well, milady’s a countess now. She’s a good deal too clever. Butley Dene was well out of her.’

‘My dear boy, Butley Dene was a long sight too clever to be caught. We know what we know, of course, but his name was never hinted at in the trial. There was not a particle of evidence against him, and also, he was not worth anything for damages.’

‘Oh! no! Butley Dene would never have married her—not but what I fancied that summer that she really liked him



better than anyone else. He was such a good-looking fellow. He always made his way with women.'

'Roysdean only wanted to be quit of her, and get the money. They were always as hard up as they could be. She was only the daughter of a poor Irish peer, and hadn't a sou, though she had a grand capacity for spending money. I agree with you; she *did* like Butley Dene best; but the other two had the money, and so their names came up.'

'Well, anyhow, she doesn't want for money now. Dunderton's very rich, I believe!'

'Oh! enormously. Mines somewhere, they say. I wonder what the dowager thinks? She's very religious; goes in for refuges, friendless and fallen, and all that sort of thing.'

'Well, she'd better let charity begin at home with her new daughter-in-law.'

Dolly Denver rose to take his cigar-case



off the mantel-piece. In so doing it slipped and rolled under the grate. Dolly exhumed it carefully and wiped it lovingly.

‘I wouldn’t have anything happen to that for worlds, colonel,’ he said. ‘Poor Jack Woodlyn gave it to me before he left. You don’t remember Jack Woodlyn, I daresay. A gunner who was a great deal in our mess that year at Aldershot.’

‘I almost think I do. A nice fellow—cheery and bright—light weight—good rider?’

‘We were at Eton together. He was a real good sort. At one time I was awfully afraid Mrs. Roysdean was going to get hold of him; but he sheered off just in time. Then something or other went wrong; I don’t know what it was; I fancy money. He never told me, but he went on leave suddenly, and then sent in his papers. I was awfully sorry, and never saw him again. Went to Australia, some one said.’



It was that summer of which Dolly Denver had spoken, when the Crimson Cuirassiers were quartered in the cavalry barracks at Aldershot. It had been an eventful summer to Jack Woodlyn. He had begun it as a frank, careless, light-hearted fellow, scratching along on a hundred a-year besides his pay as an artillery subaltern, as happy as the day was long, especially if he could get a mount in some soldier's steeplechases. Then, in the Crimson Cuirassiers, he found again his old school-chum, Dolly Denver—just such another as himself—and was often to be seen in the cavalry mess across the barrack-square, where his laughter was the heartiest of any.

Then, towards the close of the hunting-season, Major Roysdean, the new brigademajor, took up his appointment, and his beautiful little wife her abode, in the little doll's house of a hut, buried in shrubs, opposite the barracks. She was a childish



little person, who looked as if she would not hurt a fly. But she was as cruel and as clever as she was pretty.

She spread her net like a beautiful spider among the artistic prettinesses of her tiny drawing-room, where she would lure men into tea in the twilight. She would do her morning's shopping in the town, so as to return, by way of the Crimson Cuirassiers' barracks, exactly at the moment when the officers were idling up and down the road that ran through the stables superintending the men at 'stables' in within.

Poor Jack fancied her just such another light-hearted young thing as himself, and walked unhesitatingly into her snares. Poor Jack! she was the first woman he had ever known well, except his sisters, as hitherto his mind—as every well-conditioned English lad's should be—was occupied rather with his work and his sport than with society. But she let him



ride home from hunting with her now and then, when she could get no one better; she doled him out a solitary waltz at the club subscription dances (he *was* grateful, for he knew how vilely he danced), and would be so charming that his head fairly swam.

Poor Jack got regularly dazed. The woman was fast making a perfect fool of him. He began to feel jealous of everyone she spoke to, including the dry brigade-major himself.

The finishing touch to his complete subjugation was given one delicious Sunday evening. He happened to meet Mrs. Roysdean at Waterloo Station, and came down with her all alone, and had her all to himself for a blissful hour and a quarter, (including the wait at Woking,) in that train which is usually laden on the Sabbath evening by the sons of Mars hurrying back from town in time for Monday morning's early field drill.



Two days later came the crisis. Jack had been galloping a friend's horse he was to ride in a race at the divisional meeting that was coming off the next week. But his head was full of Mrs. Roysdean, and he turned into the little rose-curtained hut before it was time to dress for mess.

She was alone, and evidently delighted to see him. Jack found her sitting on a low sofa in a bewitching tea-gown. He rushed madly on his fate.

Almost before she knew what he was about, he was kneeling beside her, his arm round her waist, incoherently telling her how much he loved her.

She did not repulse him; she did not order him out of the house. But she wounded him far more deeply. She got away from him, and leant against the mantelshelf, laughing at him till the tears came into her pretty eyes.

‘ You silly, silly boy ! You very funny, funny boy ! ’



She was still laughing when her husband walked in.

'Oh! Robert! you mustn't be jealous,' she exclaimed, laughing more than ever. 'I've *made* such a conquest! This dear boy says he's dying of love for me, don't you, Jack? Oh! it's too funny! But you mustn't say it again; oh! no! indeed you mustn't!'

And her laughter was contagious, for the brigade-major laughed too. Jack never knew how he got out of the house.

He had a nasty crumpler at the races over a hurdle. His nerves were shaken, he felt unhinged, and he did not ride as well as usual. His head was too bad to allow him to dine at mess, and not bad enough for him to go to bed. Restless and bored in his own quarters, and hot and feverish, about eleven o'clock he strolled out into the open air.

Distant strains of music came to him



from the club-house, where all the beauty and gallantry of the neighbourhood were assembled at the Race Ball.

A wild longing seized Jack to see Mrs. Roysdean once more. He walked across to the club-house and into the verandah. Without being seen, he scanned the mass of beautiful dresses and gorgeous uniforms, mingling in chaotic confusion within. But the sound of a voice he knew—oh! how well!—turned his attention to a couple seated on a secluded bench under a tree on the tennis ground. There could be no mistaking her, in her white ball-dress, her yellow hair gleaming.

Jack could not help it; he went a few steps nearer.

Who was her companion? He felt he *must* know.

Her head was on his shoulder, his arm round her. She was speaking, her eyes upturned to his face.

‘It’s all right then, isn’t it, for next



Saturday? One o'clock at the Stores. The turnery department. It's quieter. You might get a box for some play or other that night—a top one. And look here, Butley, I think that waiter recognized me—let's go somewhere else.'

Jack Woodlyn made another step forward, and got a good view of her companion in his blue tunic.

It was Butley Dene of the Crimson Cuirassiers.

The next day, as Dolly Denver told, Jack Woodlyn went on leave; his battery knew him no more.

But he did not go to Australia. He enlisted under an assumed name at the cavalry depot at Canterbury, in a regiment serving in Egypt. Shortly afterwards a horse came down heavily with him out at watering order one frosty morning, and he broke his nose. This altered his appearance completely.

Thus, when a year later—the Crimson



Cuirassiers having been ordered to Egypt — Woodlyn found himself detailed as orderly to the field-officer of the day, no one would have recognized him.

Certainly Butley Dene did not, and he was the field-officer on duty after whom Woodlyn rode out round the guards, over the desert under the stars.

There were none of the enemy's sharpshooters hovering near that night, and yet, as Dolly Denver had told, the morning's sun saw them both stretched lifeless on the sand.



## AN ARRESTED ELOPEMENT.

ON board ship ! To some it awakens extremely painful and unromantic reminiscences. To others, such as 'put a girdle round the earth,' or nearly so, the very sound brings back pleasant memories of friendships—quickly formed, indeed, but strong as death—if of nothing more.

It was quite dark under the shadow of the deck-house aft ; so dark that you did not notice the two figures sitting on the locker till you were close upon them. But these two, oblivious of all the world but themselves—he, of course, had his arm round her waist, and she, naturally, al-



lowed her hand to lie in his palm. You know the attitude.

*She*, with the garrulity of her sex: 'You *do* love me, really,—truly?'

*He*, in the dumb-show of his: 'My own . . . can you ask . . . you darl . . . ?'

*She*, with the inconsistency of woman: 'Don't! Oh, don't! I *mean* it, Guy! Now, tell me, what *am* I to say to papa?'

*He*: 'Say? Why, my Evie, the same as I shall say to my uncle: ask for his blessing, and something to marry on!'

*She*, unconsciously edging slightly away along the locker: 'Marry on! Oh! don't let us think of that yet, Guy! Why, it seems to me quite wonderful enough to be engaged! And it isn't three weeks since I left school!'

*Voice from through the skylight*: 'Three by honours and the odd, by Jove!'

*Another voice*, in a minor key: 'What the dickens induced you to lead spades, eh?'



*She:* 'But about your uncle, and papa?'

*He:* 'Well, that's just it, you see, Evie. Everything depends on him—our whole fate!'

*She:* 'But you're his favourite nephew, you say, Guy, and his godson, and his heir?'

*He:* 'So he's always told me; and now, just as he's leaving the service, retiring on his pension and his savings (which can't be few), he *can* help us, if he will. I shall send him your photo, and if he doesn't come down handsomely for us, I'll be——'

*Steward,* from below, approaching hurriedly: 'Please, sir, Major Trumpington has sent for you to cut in, sir.'

Curtain descends upon a slow exit down the companion, while the man in the moon grins his broadest.

In the deep verandah of a *châlet* on the



rhododendron-clad slopes of the Himalayas, two girls lolled in lounging-chairs during the heat of the day. You could tell they were sisters at a glance, so alike were they in height, features, and colouring. But if Hilda was the handsomer, Evie, the younger, had the sweeter, softer expression. That of Hilda was a trifle imperious and discontented. She had been brought out to India from school in England very young, to fill a difficult position for a motherless girl, that of mistress of her father's house. He was an official of high standing, bound to entertain largely, and too busy to look after his daughter. Handsome Hilda was naturally much admired and sought after. Speedily she became engaged to the man of her choice. But, ere the wedding could take place, came the crash of the Agra Bank failure, and her father's savings of a lifetime vanished, leaving him with nothing but his pay. The lover could not stand



the test, and the engagement was broken off. How much Hilda suffered no one ever guessed, for she was not demonstrative. But her pride was sorely wounded; the whole nature of the girl became changed, and she grew embittered and hardened. Next, as a matter of course, she revenged herself. For many months, now, in every large gay station in the plains, in every giddy hill-resort, the name of the handsome Miss Kelverton had become the bye-word, even in the fastest sets, for her flirting propensities. Many were the men she had amused herself with, and more than one heart had she seriously damaged.

But now they, in turn, were revenged. Hilda was herself passionately and hopelessly in love.

Major the Honourable Alured Adayre was an eminently good-looking and smart officer in a crack cavalry regiment. But he had by no means a good reputation



among women, either at home or in India. There was a Mrs. Adayre, who, report said, he had married for her money. This lady, who deserved thoroughly all the pity she got, found it best to live in England, while the fascinating major served in India, or to travel abroad, when duty called the latter home. The latter consoled himself for her absence. The attraction, for the moment, was Hilda Kelverton. But as his leave at Simree was nearly up, and he was shortly due back with his regiment in Madras, people were saying that the little idyll must have an end.

The two girls were discussing a most important matter—namely, their gowns for an approaching ball to be given by the Lieutenant-Governor.

‘Such a comfort to have you come out now with some new clothes for us both,’ drawled Hilda, languidly. ‘I was weary of Calcutta shops and verandah tailors!’

‘I *am* glad to be out with you, Hilda



dear,' answered the younger sister, softly, glancing up almost timidly. 'I think India's awful fun, and it's very nice to be with you and papa again. Aren't you glad to have me, or only the dresses?' she added.

'Of course, child,' laughed Hilda, a shade disdainfully, looking at the fresh, pretty speaker, 'though your English roses do make one seem pastier-faced than ever!'

'I'm only two years younger than you,' pouted Eva; 'you needn't call me "child," I'm sure. And, as for looks, why, everyone thinks we're just exactly alike. Every day I'm being taken for—'

She was interrupted by the entrance of bearer, carrying a magnificent bouquet fragrant with tube-roses, and handing a note bearing the crest of the Crimson Cuirassiers.

'How lovely! For the ball to-night, of course! Who sent it, Hilda?' eagerly questioned Evie.



‘ Little girls should not be curious. But you may know, however. Major Adayre.’

Evie let the bouquet slowly fall on the table by which she was standing, and looked up at her sister with a grave face, and a sort of shocked awe in her soft eyes.

‘ Well?’ questioned the other, her eyes smiling too, now.

Evie was very young, and was fresh from the very careful schoolmistress to whom Mr. Kelverton confided his daughters. She got very red.

‘ Oh! nothing,’ she stammered. ‘ Only I don’t quite like—I mean I’ve heard—that is to say, people—I don’t think you should get bouquets from *him*,’ she ended abruptly.

Hilda’s eyes flashed.

‘ And why not, Miss Grundy, may I inquire?’

‘ Don’t be angry, Hilda, but people say, you know, he’s not really nice—not as nice



as he seems ; and then, Hilda,' approaching nearer, and speaking solemnly, 'they say, too—you haven't heard, of course, but I believe it's quite true—he's a married man, with a wife at home !'

To her supreme amazement, her sister leant back in her chair with a laugh which was not pleasant to hear.

'Ma chère petite ! and is that all !'

As if it were possible to be unhappy when you are eighteen, and starting for your first big ball, in a most beautiful and becoming frock ! But upon the fair and unclouded horizon of her youthful happiness loomed a small dark cloud, the first Evie had ever known. Hilda's flirtation with dubious Adayre seemed to her something very dreadful, and a vague sense of misgiving pervaded her.

To counterbalance this, had she not Guy's letter in her pocket ?—his last letter, for Guy wrote *nearly* every day. This



letter was a nice, honest one, as, indeed, they all were. But it was also an important one, for it contained good news.

‘Uncle Fred’s a brick,’ it began. ‘He writes like one. But I enclose the letter, and you can read it for yourself. He is awfully pleased with the photo. Of course, how could he be otherwise? He really is a good old chap, and I hope you’ll soon make his acquaintance. He has sent in his resignation, and is retiring, and going home in a mail or two.’

His uncle’s letter naturally entailed a postscript from Guy, with numerous sums and arithmetical problems attached, and ending with a series of suggestions as to dates that made Evie’s heart tremble with excitement, and with visions of an immediate trousseau.

All this whirled through her brain as she was carried up to the Lieutenant-Governor’s ball. In the wide portico they deposited her. On the doorstep a tall figure



stood evidently awaiting them. It was Major Adayre.

He helped Hilda out of the jampan, and removed her wraps with an air of easy familiarity, not to say proprietorship, which brought back, with a rush, all Evie's fears. They were not allayed by the glimpse she caught of her sister's face under the lamp. It wore an expression such as Evie had never seen on it before. There was no mistaking the way in which she looked up into Adayre's face.

A great feature in all Indian dances is the 'sitting-out' accommodation. Thanks to the climate, this art can be carried to a high pitch, and no hostess neglects to do her best to encourage it. After supper, Evie found herself ensconced, with her partner, in one of these snug, dim nooks in the corner of the verandah. She had enjoyed her dance much hitherto, and had been a success. More than once, indeed,



had people mistaken her for Hilda, which filled her little heart with pride.

But Evie was sitting alone now. The band had begun again, and her partner had left her. The next one had not yet found her out. But she was nothing loth to have a little rest and quiet.

Her thoughts were rudely interrupted by a couple who began conversation outside on the terrace in tones plainly audible through the creeper-covered trellis-work. Evidently they thought the verandah unoccupied.

In a moment she had recognised the voices of her sister and Major Adayre, and the words they uttered froze her innocent little heart within her.

It was not the man's passionate pleading, or Hilda's trembling avowal, which horrified her most. In a short time she found they were making plans. She heard trains mentioned, steamers home, tours in Italy—all disjointed and uncon-



nected fragments of talk, which left, however, but one very strong impression on her mind.

Hilda was about to do something very wrong indeed.

Here the music ceased—the verandah was flooded with dancers. The guilty conversation ceased, too, and Evie's partner found her. But her head was in a whirl, and she could but beg him to take her back to her chaperone; she would dance no more.

Major Adayre passed near her, and she heard him tell a friend that it was his last night at Simree.

'Leave up, old fellow. Off to-morrow down to the regiment in Madras. See you at breakfast, though!'

The imminence of the peril came home to Evie suddenly, and she felt she must have quiet to think it out, and consider what she ought to do.

Hilda must be saved from herself at



any price. But how? Evie must think and plan.

She told her chaperone she had a headache, and wished to go home. Some young man rushed off to find her jampan in the crowd at the entrance. Evie fetched her cloak, and covering herself up in it, for the night air was chill, stood in the portico waiting for her conveyance and its bearers.

It was very dark in the doorway, and as she stood there, motionless, a figure suddenly came up behind her.

‘Hilda, mine!’ a voice whispered in her ear. ‘I’ve made all arrangements. Four o’clock at the bottom of your road to catch the morning mail. *Au revoir!*’

And the form vanished.

Evie’s head swam. In a moment the truth flashed through her brain, and her worst fears were realised.

To home and to bed.

‘What a blessing he mistook me for



her,' thought Evie. 'She does not know the hour fixed, and I do, now! But then, if she does not turn up now, he may wait for her—come for her—ah! what am I to do? His mistake will have been no use, after all!'

But, two minutes later, she sprang up in bed struck with a sudden idea. Then, noiselessly, she got up and dressed herself quickly, and stole out, wrapped in a large cloak.

Four o'clock was sounding from the guard-room of the barracks, ringing over the valley and hills, in the stillness of the early summer dawn, as she reached the foot of the little winding road which led to their bungalow. In the dim light she saw a jampan, with extra bearers, waiting on the Mall, and beside it a mounted figure.

Without a word she allowed him to pack her into the jampan, and they hur-



ried off down the hill, on the road to the plains.

The path was too narrow for a pony to ride abreast a jampan, and Evie was glad of it. It gave no opportunity for conversation, and she lay back and muffled herself in her cloak all the way down the mountains.

Her bearers deposited the jampan in the verandah of the *dâk bungalow* where the hill path joins the railway.

Adayre sprang off his pony and hastened to assist the occupant of the jampan to alight. The hood was put back, the cloak thrown off, and the daylight revealed—the wrong sister!

Evie stood up to her full height, and looked Adayre full in the face.

‘By mistake you fixed the hour of this elopement with *me* last night, and not with my sister, Major Adayre. I am glad of it, for it has enabled me to save



her from an awful wrong. But my mission ends here. Your leave is up. You can continue your journey to Madras alone. Good morning !'

'Sold, by Jove !' he said.

Evie turned away to arrange for the means of returning to Simree. She found herself followed.

Admiration had triumphed over disappointment in Adayre's face.

'Look here, Miss Kelverton,' he said, 'you're an awfully plucky girl, you are ! And you do look so nice in this morning light—so fresh and pretty. Come and have some breakfast—Evie ?'

She turned upon him indignantly, but, ere she had time to reply, someone came out of one of the rooms of the *dâk bungalow* opening into the verandah. He had evidently heard the last few words, for he cast a searching glance at the couple, and then walked across and asked Evie's



jampan-bearers, who were resting on the grass at a short distance, who they were.

‘Kelverton sahib’s missy—the little missy, Evie, missy,’ replied the man.

A look of intense astonishment passed over the face of the interrogator, who was an elderly man, thin, and dried, and worn-looking.

‘I couldn’t believe my ears when I heard him call her by her name!’ he muttered to himself. ‘But I recognised the face at once! What an awful discovery. My poor boy!’ he added.

Then he turned to Adayre’s luggage, which was piled up in the verandah, and read his name and address.

‘Tut! tut! tut!’ he exclaimed, shaking his head gravely. ‘And with a man like him, too! My poor boy! She must have deceived you grossly. I am thankful that I’ve discovered her true character in time!’



The two trains sped their divers ways, and a little girl, alone and weary, now that the excitement was all over, the deed done, the danger passed, was borne upwards again through the pine forests, to the home she had quitted at dawn.

She returned to find her sister but just up, and somewhat irritable.

‘You’ve been out early, Evie. I thought you would be tired after last night.’

‘I have been out to get a little fresh air,’ replied Evie, reddening over the only lie she had ever told.

Mr. Kelverton returned in two days, to find his eldest daughter singularly out of temper, and his younger strangely quiet and low-spirited.

The cause of the former’s irritability was not far to seek. But she did not wear the willow long for the departed major. Ere the season was a month older Simree was excited over the engagement of the handsome Miss Kelverton to an old and



constant admirer, who was a very good match, though plain and unprepossessing; but for whom, the gossips said, she had never pretended to care a rap.

But her sister's depression continued and deepened. Evie's English roses left her, and her gay spirits too.

All this dated from a letter from Guy, written two days after that night trip down the hill to the *dâk bungalow*.

'MY EVIE,' it began. 'Do you really love me, and if so will you wait for me? For reasons I cannot bear to tell you my uncle has changed his mind, and declines to help us with any money to marry on. I cannot enter into details; his conduct is too bad; the reasons he gives so utterly unworthy of consideration. All we can do is to go on loving each other, and having patience. I trust you—I believe in you, as I believe in heaven, and I know you do



in me. Who shall dare to come between us? Darling, it is horribly, wickedly hard; but, please God, we will be happy yet! Yours for always, GUY.'

Man proposes. The Kelvertons left Simree early that year, soon after Hilda's marriage to her plain adorer. Mr. Kelverton's leave was up, and he returned to Punkahpore, taking his younger daughter with him.

Evie was flagging both in health and spirits, losing her looks, people said. Punkahpore is a horribly unhealthy place after the rains. Typhoid fever broke out there, as usual. One morning it carried off Evie Kelverton.

A few months later came the Black Mountain campaign, and Guy Carlyon, ordered up with his regiment, was shot in carrying a hill-top.

Mrs. Cramwell (Hilda Kelverton) is a



great deal in England, or in the hills, for her husband has a good appointment in an out-of-the-way hole, where it is very hot. Major Adayre is likewise in England a great deal, or in the hills. You may meet them any season sitting in the Row in Hyde Park, or riding together on the Mall.



## THE SISTER IN GREY.

It was a great night at Madeleigh Court. The lodge gates were thrown open, and a ceaseless stream of carriages rolled up the long avenue to where the gaily-lighted windows of the old tudor Manor-house illumined the winter night. All the county was there, from the Duchess downwards. The strains of Liddell's band were wafted across the park among the leafless old elms, and the quaintly-panelled apartments were gay with merry dancers. There were heaps of men, and no lack of pretty girls or pretty frocks. But quite the prettiest girl in the room



was the host's fair niece, Gladys Garthland.

And such was evidently the opinion of the heir of Madeleigh Court, for it was patent to everyone that he monopolised more than his fair share of her dances.

'Oh! it has been going on for years—ever since they were children!' said one chaperone to another, not so well versed in the *carte du pays*. 'But it has not been formally given out, you know. Miles Madeleigh was to soldier for a few years first, to see a little of life, Gladys to have a few seasons in town, just to see if they knew their own minds.'

'Well, there is no doubt about it now, I should imagine,' replied the other, 'to judge by the way they look into each other's eyes,' she added, as the pair floated past together to the strains of a dreamy waltz.

'She is a handsome girl, is she not? So tall and slim and the picture of health.'



What a crush, isn't it? And how well everything is done !

' Yes ; we've not had a ball like this for a long time in Loamshire. We shall remember it for years !'

Were her words prophetic ? Perhaps ; for, indeed, that night at Madeleigh Court was long remembered, and first and chiefly, by the cousins, Gladys and Miles.

It was long after supper, when some of the guests had already begun to think of leaving—people with a long drive home—and when the dancing on a less crowded floor was just perfect. So those two thought. Thus, when the waltz was over, he took her into the conservatory, among the camelias and the Chinese lanterns, and sought out a special seat, which he himself had arranged with a view to this *tête-à-tête*. And then ? What next ? Can you ask ? Of course Gladys knew what was coming, and Miles needed to use few



words. But he got his answer, quite definitely and decided, just as he wished it, and as he had felt for years it would be. And so, when he led her back into the ball-room, they both looked round the quaint room, and up at the ancestral portraits, which seemed to beam down upon them in a new light.

‘ Ah, Gladys, to think that you will be mistress here !’

And the true woman spoke in her as she answered, softly, with a blush,

‘ With you as my master, Miles !’

‘ We shall never forget to-night, shall we ?’ was the low reply.

Again prophetic words ! Loamshire long had cause to remember that eventful evening. For it was not many weeks later that there came that fearful financial crisis in the city, those black days of panic and crash, when the great banking house of Farringdale Brothers suddenly crumbled into ruins. The Madeleighs had been



partners in the firm for two generations, and, of course, they went too. Great was the consternation in Loamshire ; it was an utter and complete smash. The establishment was broken up at once, Madeleigh Court was put in the market, and the *Gazette* announced that Miles Madeleigh had retired from the Crimson Cuirassiers. Mr. Madeleigh had a large family, and he went off with them to Dresden, a haven of refuge for impecunious Britons in search of cheap education.

The blow did not spare Gladys Garthland. Her little fortune was all in Farringdale Brothers, and so was irretrievably lost.

It was the last evening in the old house, where three generations of Madeleighs had been born and had died. On the morrow the family would be scattered far and wide. In the midst of such an overwhelming misfortune their own personal affairs had been kept somewhat in the background



by Miles and Gladys. There had been so much to do, so much to settle. His father had been so shattered, and his mother worried quite ill. Miles had had very little time to give a thought to himself. But now he sought out his cousin, and found her sitting in the spring twilight in the deep, embayed seat of an oriel window, looking across the darkening park, where the rooks were building in the bare elms.

‘Gladys, I have come to say good-bye. I am going away to-morrow.’

‘So are we all, to Dresden. But why good-bye, Miles? What are you going to do? What are your plans?’

‘My darling, don’t ask me. It *is* good-bye, for the present. For long it may be—perhaps for years. I have determined to do something, not to be a burden on my father, who has so many to see after. I will say no more now.’

‘Oh, but, Miles, what *can* you do? You never worked at Eton, and you never cared



for anything but soldiering. What *are* you to do? You were obliged to leave the Crimsons !'

'Don't talk about the dear old corps, Gladys,' he answered, with a wince, as if she had hurt him. 'I can't bear it yet. But what I wanted to ask you was to trust me, to think of me, to——'

'To wait for you? Oh, Miles, I would wait a hundred years. Better times *must* come !'

'You're an awfully noble girl ! But, no—I'm not such an utterly selfish brute as all that ! I can't, I won't, say "wait." All I ask you is, don't forget me. Think well of me always. You'll never find any fellow who will love you *better*, Gladys !'

'I never want to,' she sobbed, her head on his shoulder; while he, oh ! tell it not in the Crimsons' mess-room, found the oriel window grow blurred and misty, as he looked out into the growing darkness.

. . . . .





Gladys Garthland accompanied her uncle and aunt to Germany, where she soon had her hands full looking after a family utterly unused to the circumstances in which they found themselves. Added to which, Mrs. Madeleigh fell into a severe illness, brought on by shock and worry, through which Gladys nursed her successfully.

‘The doctor says you were wonderful, Miss Garthland,’ said to her, one day, one of those good Samaritans, who are generally to be found in every English colony abroad, and who was always in and out of the Madeleighs’ flat, assisting Gladys. ‘He says it was the nursing, not the doctoring brought your aunt round, and that you have a perfect gift for it!’

Gladys smiled, somewhat wearily.

‘It is my first experience, but I think I like it very much, and a nurse “is born, not made,” isn’t she? I wonder how it would do to take it up? I must do something for myself, and I hate teaching!’



‘It’s hard work, very, but you are so tall and strong, and have such pluck! A cousin of mine, the daughter of an officer, has become one of the Netley Sisters, one of the military nurses. She likes it.’

Gladys’ face brightened.

‘My father was in the Guards, and, once, I thought—I hoped—I should like to be a soldiers’ nurse,’ she added.

‘Why not try?’ replied her informant. ‘You have interest, and officers’ daughters have prior claims for admittance. But you might be sent to Egypt—India?’

‘I shouldn’t care where I was sent, or what happened to me, now!’ was Gladys’ reply.

For her heart tightened as she remembered a letter in her pocket, received the day before.

‘MY OWN GLADDY, (I shall call you that as long as I know that you are not anyone else’s,)—While the mother was so ill I did



not like to bother you about my affairs ; but now that they are settled, I am writing to you and the governor to say that I have been and gone and done it ! I've taken the shilling, and I am Private Miles, 2,047, 35th Lancers, to be shipped off with the next draft to join that regiment in India ! It's nothing to be ashamed of, Gladys. You know that I never was good at books or at farming (so useless as a cowboy !) and that I always was a soldier, and fond of horses. It's hard work and rough ; but, nowadays, it does not take a fellow so long to get his commission from the ranks ; and then, perhaps, some day—you promised to be a soldier's wife, once, Gladys, remember. Well, you must let me make castles in the air. I shall want all the hope and pluck I've got to pull me through.—Yours *ever*,

‘ MILES (2,047). ’

Not many months later ‘ Sister Gladys ’ found herself installed as a Grey Sister in



the huge hospital whose towers and windows overlook Southampton Water and the hunting-ground of the Norman kings.

‘Bedad! an’ if I don’t think she’s rightly named entoirely!’ cried a private in the Connaught Fusiliers, from the sick-bed where he lay slowly returning to health after a long bout of typhoid fever in India. ‘Shure, an’ it makes ye *glad* even to look at her, to say nothin’ of her gentle ways wid ye!’

And he gazed gratefully after Sister Gladys’s tall grey figure with the scarlet tippet as she moved about the ward.

It was very hard work, and often very unpleasant work, to one brought up as Gladys Garthland had been. But her heart was in it; she loved it. The intense interest she took in her patients quite counterbalanced the natural repulsion for hospital sights and sounds, for menial work and distasteful companions. Her time and mind were thoroughly oc-



cupied, she had less leisure to mope, to dream hopelessly of what might have been. She was happier than, at one time, in her wild despair at the breaking up of her home and engagement, she ever thought she could have been again. Thus she was noted for efficiency, and in due time, at her own request, was sent out to India, and placed as one of the three sisters in charge of the hospital at Simree, a hill-sanatorium.

The voyage out was a leisure time such as she had not yet experienced. Ladies are few on the great white transports, floating villages, which do the relief work of our soldiers with our great dependency. The handsome Grey Sister found herself not a little admired and sought after by specimens of all branches of the service, naval, military, and, lastly, medical. Dr. Donald MacKay, a pleasant, red-haired little Scotchman, of the Indian Medical Department, became so wearisome and



pertinacious in attentions which evidently 'meant business,' that Sister Gladys was heartily glad when they reached their voyage's end, and parted on their divers ways.

She was glad to reach India, too. She remembered the huge peninsula sheltered somewhere, if indeed he still lived, a certain Private Miles, trooper in the 35th Lancers. The thought gave her a strange, sad pleasure.

But, when once she reached Simree, she was far too busy for any such dreamings. It was a sickly season in the plains, and the hill-hospitals were full. Disease slays more in India than does the enemy. Fever we have always with us, and ever and anon the cholera fiend swoops down over the land.

Among a little batch sent up from the furnace heat below, was one poor fellow who had had most uncommon hard luck, said the doctor in charge of the convoy.



First, this unfortunate soldier had been kicked in the face on parade by a vicious horse, and was still plastered, sewn and bandaged therefrom. Then, upon the top of that, he had had fever, as one always does in India if one gets a hurt—a real bad hurt. To cap all, on the journey up, he had got what is metaphorically called ‘a touch of the sun,’ and arrived raving, only to become unconscious.

So they still thought him, when he became again feebly and indistinctly aware of the world around him, of voices speaking, of understanding what they said, though he lay quite still with his eyes closed.

Out in the verandah, close to his bed, through the ‘chick’ or screen of grass, in the open doorway, he heard two of the Grey Sisters talking.

‘I say, have you noticed how sweet he is on Sister Gladys?’ remarked one.

‘Who is sweet on Sister Gladys?’



And the repetition of the well-loved name roused the sick man still more into consciousness.

‘Why, the new doctor who’s come up, —the Scotchman!’

‘Ah! they came out on board ship together, I heard him say. Old friends.’

‘It will come to something, you’ll see. She is far too good-looking to waste her life at work here, is Sister Gladys.’

‘Far too good-looking for that little red-headed Scotchman, you mean. Hush! what was that?’

It was a low moan from a bed near; but, when the nurse looked in, the patient was, apparently, comatose again.

At that moment a tall form came down the ward, and a peculiarly sweet voice asked,

‘Shall I put these flowers into glasses for this ward? Aren’t they beautiful?’

‘Yes, indeed. Tuberose, how sweet! How did you get them?’



‘Dr. MacKay sent them me,’ was the answer.

Again a low moan from that bed. The patient had opened his eyes when the nurse spoke, and a strange expression of surprise passed over his face. But it lasted only a moment. The effort was too much for the sick man. The eyes closed once more, and unconsciousness ensued.

‘That’s Number Six again,’ said the Sister who had spoken first.

‘He’s very bad,’ remarked the other. ‘The doctor thinks he won’t last many hours.’

With the night came Sister Gladys’s turn of duty. Number Six was roused by finding the doctor and the Sister standing over him. Again he brightened up, and made an effort to speak. But Dr. MacKay forbade any talking, and turned away to consult with the nurse. To the sick man, lying there helpless and almost speechless, what an interminable length seemed that



consultation, the great Indian full-moon light, meantime, stealing in through the open doorway, and lighting up the tall grey and scarlet figure and sweet face, framed by its snowy wimple, of the Grey Sister, and the carrotty head of the little doctor.

Would he stop talking to her for ever? wondered the sick man, his senses growing sharper every moment. The doctor seemed loth to leave her, and go on into the next ward, as in duty bound. The sick man saw the eager look in his face upturned to hers, heard his low passionate tones. Could they only be talking 'shop'? Ah, if he could only see the Grey Sister's face! But it was hidden from him.

With that last flicker of consciousness and vitality that precedes the final extinction, the sick man's mental agony increased. Too feeble to cry out, to speak even, he could only lie and watch the pair, gnawed with torture. Was he



to die there, he asked himself, seeing her made love to by that little wretch? The thought wrung from him a low moan.

This recalled the doctor to a sense of duty. He turned away at last, and, as his little figure passed through the doorway, a sigh of relief escaped Sister Gladys.

‘Thank goodness!’ she said, half aloud, to herself. ‘That’s over. I don’t think *he’ll* bother me again.’

The ears of the dying are very acute, and her words reached Number Six in his bed. He made a supreme effort.

‘Gladdy!’ he gasped.

A little later, the doctor, passing down the verandah on his way out of the hospital, could not, for the life of him, resist glancing in to where he had left Sister Gladys. What he saw made him stop short, and, pushing aside the ‘chick,’ enter the ward.

The moon was shining upon Number Six’s bed, and on the figure of the Grey



Sister as she knelt beside it. In her arms was clasped the sick man's head, his face standing out in ghastly pallor in the moonlight, against her scarlet tippet and her blue hospital-gown. And she was kissing it.

She did not hear the doctor's step behind her, or notice him till he bent over the bed. Then she looked up at him with a white face wet with tears.

'I have found him at last,' she murmured, 'only—to lose him.'

'Forgive me,' said the little doctor, 'I did not know——'

And then he stooped down, and lifted the dead man's head from her arm.



## A HORRIBLE HONEYMOON.

WHAT a thing it is to have married a mighty hunter! I ought to have known that, the moment Jim set eyes on the flying horns of that vanishing herd of black buck, he would be pining to be after them!

We were having such a delightful ride in the cool of the morning—the first morning after our marriage! The air was crisp, the sun yet low over the eastern hills, the world still fresh and fair. The bare, sun-baked hillocks, the arid waters, that surround the green oasis of ‘Heart’s Delight,’ the Maharajah’s summer palace, where we were spending our honeymoon, seemed



almost beautiful in our eyes, as we sauntered leisurely along, our ponies as close together as the evenness of the ground permitted. The attendant and ubiquitous grooms we had told to await our return—we wanted this first ride all to our own little selves! Already it seemed as if years separated us from all the fuss of yesterday—the marigold-garland verandah; the smart bonnets, which had replaced the *solar-topees* at the unwonted hour of noon; the venerable tall hats, exhumed for the auspicious occasion; the gay uniforms, and, finally, the driving off, in Jim's little bamboo cart, 'over the hills and far away,' to this out-of-the-way nook of 'Heart's Delight.'

If Jim the lover had been delightful, what were not my views about Jim the husband, as I looked up at his dear, tanned face and bleached moustache, as he rode so close by my side!

And just then his keen hunter's eyes



espied that unlucky herd of black buck, alarmed by our unexpected appearance, bounding away over the horizon ! Not that the sight told upon him yet, though.

‘ One—two—four—five—’ counted Jim, screwing up his eyes, ‘ and a fine head, by Jove !’ he added, as the horned lord of the family brought up the rear, driving his harem before him.

When the sun grew hot we turned back to the palace. The servants had laid breakfast for us in the beautifully carved white marble garden-house, where we had slept. In front shimmered an artificial tank of water, where fat fish basked in the shadow of the stone steps. Around were bosky alleys of mango and orange-trees, with here and there open sunny spaces, gay with purple bougainvillea and yellow alamanda, and sweet with roses. The ring-doves cooed unseen in the branches ; the pert hoopoes strutted about the paths. Behind, on a wide terrace, and faced by a



huge portico, rose the palace of 'Heart's Delight,' a dream of delicate tracery of salmon-coloured stone. Surrounded by an obsequious group of servants, my prince by my side, I felt like a fairy heroine out of the 'Arabian Nights.'

Then the spell was broken.

'Those black buck!' muttered Jim, his mouth full of tinned salmon. 'I *should* like to have a try for them this evening. On that ground, with those hillocks, I believe I could get up to them beautifully!'

Already, with my superior woman-instinct, I knew better than to thwart even the most devoted of twenty-four-hours-old husbands, when his sporting tendencies were aroused.

'Oh! do have a try!' I exclaimed; but I fancy my tone belied my words.

'And leave you, little woman?' tenderly.

'Oh, I don't mind! I'd like you to get a nice buck.'

'You might ride out with me,' he de-



murred, 'as far as that dry jheel——'

'And get in the way and spoil sport!' I laughed, 'and have to ride back alone! I'd sooner be left here in the garden!'

'Well, I'll talk it over with Mohun!' Jim added, and then we returned to a subject that interested us both much more deeply—namely, our own two selves, and all we had ever thought or felt concerning each other, from the very first moment that Jim was introduced to me. The gentle reader will understand the style of conversation, disjointed, unconnected, eyes and hands playing their part in it, and, doubtless, lips too, might have had their share, did not the presence of the ubiquitous servants, and of Mohun the faithful, hovering in the rear, forbid.

Mohun is Jim's familiar, his *shikari* or huntsman, tall, straight, swarthy, and wiry, with a beaked nose and eyes like a hawk. Not a shot has Jim fired these many years, but Mohun has been in at



the death. He is a premier of woodcraft, a hunter to the very tips of his bony, claw-like hands. What I admire about Mohun, however, is the fact that Jim is unto him like a god. He adores the very ground his sahib walks on. Once, indeed, away in Kashmir, Jim avers, Mohun saved his life, nursing him like a woman, through a bad attack of fever up in his tiny tent on the edge of the snows.

I sometimes fancy Mohun is a shade jealous of me over our Jim. In the former's eyes I am but a poor thing. I cannot stalk, and to shoot I am afraid. I feel, on the other hand, that in the life of Jim *cum* Mohun, I have neither part nor lot.

The morning passed away like a beautiful dream. After breakfast we strolled about the garden; then, when the sun grew unbearable, we explored the cool depths of the palace.

'Heart's Delight' is one wealth of deli-



cate stone carving,—portico, loggia, oriel, balcony, and turret; the product of a land where labour is a drug in the market. The present Maharajah, brought up by English tutors, affects the place but little, preferring Simla and Calcutta. The palace was built by his old uncle, the late Maharajah, whom we deposed, a rather grim personage of the true Oriental type, and of evil, mutiny notoriety. His successor keeps the place up well, and is always ready to lend it to any English officials of the neighbouring frontier districts, and certainly it is an ideal place for a honeymoon.

We wandered through the halls, the floors of which were mostly innocent of soap and water. In the dim arches of the vast portico hung flying foxes, snoozing through the mid-day heat. The great hall was chiefly remarkable for huge gilt French mirrors and great glass candelabra, for which the late Maharajah had a true



native's passion, but which contrasted ill with the Moorish arches and the stone carving.

At the back of the palace, as we stepped out on to a hanging balcony of stone, we came unexpectedly on a large artificial pond, washing the very walls.

'Not a very delightful addition to the place!' I exclaimed, sniffing disdainfully as I gazed down into its pea-soup-like depths. 'And what is that? A rock? Mud? Rocks?'

In the shade of the walls, half in the water, half in the mud, were dark masses.

'Rocks?' laughed Jim. 'Wait and see!'

And he signed to a native who had followed us; carrying, I had wondered why, large pieces of raw meat. These he threw down among my 'rocks.'

Instantly there was a stir, an upheaval of the water, and a vision of crawling feet, of yellow-white bellies, of gaping jaws,



and of rows upon rows of gleaming teeth. The pond was alive with crocodiles! I thought they would snap off each other's hideous heads as they fought for the dainty morsels!

'There are both sorts there,' remarked Jim, calmly looking down upon the fray. 'The long-nosed, fish-eating "mugger," and the bottle, or snub-nosed gentleman, who devours the unwary washerman, when he ventures too far out into the stream.'

'Ugh!' I shuddered, turning away in disgust. 'It's horrible! I can't bear to watch them. I wish you hadn't——'

Jim apologised, abjectly, all the way back through the great hall. I forgave him. After tiffin, as we sat on the terrace in the shade of the portico, a native juggler came and performed his tricks to us. He did the most marvellous things then and there, on the bare stone, with scarcely a rag upon him in which to conceal his apparatus—quite putting a many-pocketed



European conjurer to shame. We beheld mango-trees grow under a flower-pot from a mere leaf to a shrub some feet high. We saw a man, shut up in a basket much too small for him, and stabbed through and through till the sword was gory, suddenly reappear intact from the hall behind us. The juggler swallowed knives and vomited burning tow, and when we were a-weary of him we adjourned to an open space beyond the lake, where they spread a carpet and brought chairs, and wild beasts came and fought before us. There were rams that butted each other with their horns, elephants that wrestled with their trunks, and swarthy-maned wild Brahmin bulls that charged bellowing. All these shows to do honour to my Jim, as representing Her Majesty across the frontier in Pugreepoor.

I fancy it was the fighting rams that turned Jim's thoughts back to the black buck of the morning.



He called Mohun to him. There was a brief consultation. Then he turned to me, and of course I let him go! There were yet two good hours of daylight before dinner-time. Before then Jim might secure a fine head. Mohun was forthwith sent forward with coolies and the rifle. The pony was hurriedly brought round, and Jim trotted away under the carved gateway. I must say that I felt a little sad as his knickerbockers and brown *putties* vanished round the corner of the mud huts which clustered round the palace gate.

Left to my own devices, I returned to our Pearl Garden House. Causing a chair and a table to be brought to me out on a *chabboutia*, or raised stone platform among the rose-trees, I sat down to indite a long epistle to Ethel.

Ethel! my very dearest school chum! Ethel, who, if promises counted for anything, and miles of ocean had not inter-



vened, should have been 'best girl' at my wedding! And now, after all, here I had been married with ne'er a bridesmaid at all! There were but four girls in all Pugreepoor, and, of these, one was whity-brown and impossible, and the other three none too friendly with me on account of the failure of their designs upon Jim, the eligible assistant magistrate.

So, naturally, there were reams to write to Ethel. I wrote, and I wrote, till the short Indian twilight fell over the garden, and the servants came to say dinner was ready, and would I wait for the sahib?

I awoke from writing all about Jim, to miss him. How late he was! I wandered disconsolately about the gardens on the look-out for him. But he came not. Instead came the night, alone. The bats began to skim under the branches. The flying foxes emerged from the portico, and the distant cry of a jackal, weird, blood-curdling, replaced the ring-dove's coo of the morning.



After waiting an hour, I yielded reluctantly to the old bearer's persuasion, and toyed with a solitary meal which choked me. In vain Ali Boxus assured me that there was no counting upon the sahib's return when once he set off shooting. That was poor comfort! How different had been our snug little dinner of the night before!

Darkness fell: under the shadow of the mango-trees, a darkness that might be felt. The moon would not rise till midnight; with the darkness came all sorts of fears, real and imaginary; fears of snakes and toads and jackals; fears of accident, if not of death, to Jim; recollections of horrid guns going off unawares, of ponies falling down and breaking their riders' necks!

I no longer dared go out as far as the gateway and listen for his horse's hoofs. Even the strange, dark garden had mysterious terrors. I huddled in the centre octagonal room of our Pearl Kiosque, sit-



ting miserably on my little camp bed, Jim's empty one beside me.

I think that I must have cried a little, at last, I felt so utterly lonely. Then the ayah came and persuaded me to let her undress me and put me to bed, as was her wont. She gently massaged my limbs, crooning the while softly to herself. The dim light of a wick in a saucer of oil on the ground in one corner faintly lit up the beautiful tracery of the arches, and the form of the old bearer stretched on guard in the verandah. Insensibly I dozed.

But fitfully. Every now and again I awoke starting, fancying Jim had returned. Then I began to dream, horrid dreams. I was out shooting with Jim, and wild beasts, huge and fierce, beset us. Mohun was there, but would not help us. He kept on saying that the sahib was in my charge now. Then a great sort of wolf attacked Jim. I threw myself between them—I



could see its fangs—the creature's mouth slobbered over me—I awoke with a shriek!

There, between me and a little lamp, *was* a beast—huge—gaunt—hairy—with a big mouth wide open! I could hear it eating—lapping! I sat up in terror. Was my dream true? Was it eating Jim? But my scream scared it. It slunk away—a poor, starved wretch of a pariah dog, driven to lapping the oil out of the lamp. I sprang out of bed. There was no Jim! I was still alone in this open, unprotected garden-house! I shouted for the ayah and the bearer, who woke up, frightened at my fright.

Not another moment, I exclaimed, would I remain without the sahib in this place where all sorts of things could roam in. I could not sleep a wink! I ordered them to find me out some other room at once, and I shivered with the night air and with terror.



The bearer, still half asleep, joined his hands in supplication. Of course, my High-Mightiness could go where I liked; but the Maharajah's sahib guests always had their beds laid in the Pearl Garden House. The palace was doubtless unwashed and mosquito-y, but if it was safer, I would sleep there. No, not in the big hall—that would give me the blues. Were there no little rooms?

The bearer departed to investigate, through some of the Rajah's myrmidons, lying asleep about the place. He returned with the information that my High-Mightiness could rest in the *Bebi-Khana*, the women's apartments, over the great hall. So we set forth—they do these things so easily in India—I and my servants, my bed, my bag, and my tea-basket.

The huge mirrors of the great hall, by the dim light of the bearer's lantern, reflected a very woebegone little white face. By a narrow little dirty stair in the thickness



of the wall we climbed to a suite of rooms high up. I chose the least and innermost, as the securest, as well as the airiest, with the night breeze blowing in through a glassless window opening on to a small arched balcony of stone. The servants quickly arranged my little bed, and in a few minutes I had lain down again, while the ayah, her head muffled in her white shawl, after the manner of her kind, stretched herself on the floor of the adjoining room.

Despite my gnawing anxiety about Jim, the change, the cooler air, soon made me drowsy, and I quickly fell asleep, this time soundly and dreamlessly. How long I slept I cannot tell. I was suddenly awake by the sound of a voice, near at hand.

I opened my eyes. Straight in front of me, through the carved arches of the balcony, was a brilliant patch of light. The moon had risen, but, inside, the room was in dense shadow. By the dim light of the



flickering lamp on the floor, when I turned my head, I saw a figure in the doorway.

I sprang up in bed as it advanced slowly towards me and resolved itself into that of a wizen old scarecrow of a native woman, quite half naked, and simply a mass of wrinkles and bones, crowned with a few stray grey locks. It might have been a hundred years old; it looked scarcely human, till it opened its toothless jaws and spoke.

‘Ha! here you are, Shahzadi,’ it quavered, grimly. ‘I have sought you everywhere, and I have found you at last!’ it added, with a grin so fiendish that I sat up in bed, too transfixed with terror even to scream or move.

‘The beautiful white Princess!’ it croaked, sidling nearer, ‘with the yellow hair and the pale face! Ha! Salaam! the beautiful new Maharanee! Salaam! The Maharajah’s Heart’s Delight. The beautiful prisoner—all the white men killed! Only the white



Shahzadi left, and left to be the Maharajah's *Bebi!* Ha!' she hissed. 'I have found you at last!'

She seemed about to spring upon me. I saw her eyes glitter in the gloom. For a moment I shrank up against the wall, and then I jumped over the end of the bed, and glanced round for a means of escape. But the old madwoman had got between me and the door! I tried to scream. But my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth. Besides, ayahs asleep, and swaddled up like mummies, are stone deaf. Then it all happened so quickly. She advanced upon me, nearer and nearer, still with that horrible grin and jabbering wildly.

'Found! found! You white *Bebi!* Beautiful? Faugh! Once I was beautiful too, and his Highness the Maharajah loved my long black hair and my fat white neck.'

I edged away—back—back. She drew upon me like a baleful old snake, fascinating me with her horrible glower.



‘ I was the Maharajah’s Heart’s Delight.  
I was the Maharanee, till you came, you  
white Shahzadi ! Yah !’

I was against the pillar through the arch-  
way—in the balcony—on she came !

‘ Wah ! wah !’ she croaked. ‘ Beautiful ?  
I will make you beautiful—I’ll dim those  
beautiful eyes of yours——’

A long, bony arm, bangle laden, hovered  
in the air. A knife gleamed in the moon-  
light as she swooped down upon me.  
Whether she pushed me, whether I let my-  
self fall, I cannot say. But the next mo-  
ment I was over the edge of the balcony  
and down, thirty feet, into the pond  
below !

There was a yell of maniacal laughter,  
the shadow of a figure following me as I  
fell ! I struck the water and sank. A  
struggle brought me to the surface again.  
In front of me the sheer walls of the palace  
glittered white in the moonlight. A few  
strokes, and I felt the ground under my



feet: soft, slimy ooze and mud, under the very walls.

I leant against the stone to fetch my breath, and looked up and around. Not a buttress or a prop to climb up by within reach. Under the sheer wall a narrow strip of mud. At the end of the pond, could I reach it, stone steps. I took a step forward. But, ah! what was that dark shadow in the moonlight--and another--and yet another? I had reckoned without the muggers! Muggers to right, to left, in front--basking, half asleep in the moonlight--frightful--loathsome--evil——

I clung to the wall, paralyzed with terror, not daring to move a step. How could I hope to escape those sharp eyes, those greedy jaws? But I was young, and the instinct of self-preservation is strong. I thought, if indeed at such a moment I could be said to think at all, that my only slender chance of safety lay in creeping stealthily along the tiny strip



of ooze and reaching the steps at the other end. But was it possible, without waking those slumbering monsters?

Nerving myself to the utmost, I made an effort. Luckily, my bare feet and my scanty garments enabled me to move quietly and with as little disturbance as possible of the water. I crept slowly, hardly daring to put one foot before the other. The moonlight was so fearfully searching. At every step it revealed fresh horrors—a gruesome head slowly peeping out of the water, a loathly, claw-like paw lying on the mud. The horrid monsters lay so thick together, some half-atop of the others, that even my stealthy movements rippling the water caused them to stir. My night-dress flicked some horny back, or swept over a black snout, which, when I had passed by, slowly opened and snapped-to behind me.

Once I trod on a great, fat, horny-eared toad, and I nearly collapsed with terror as



it flopped into the water, arousing the dreaded sleepers. Around me in the moonlight I seemed to see hundreds of eyes opening, hundreds of gleaming jaws full of white teeth!

The palace wall seemed interminable. Should I never gain the steps? Just, however, when they appeared within reach, and I had just begun to breathe freely, one monster, larger than all the rest, seemed to bar my way. I clung helplessly to the wall, and gave myself up for lost. For he was sleeping badly. Perhaps he had indigestion, or the mosquitoes annoyed him. Anyhow, ever and anon his long tail moved a little and his jaws slowly opened and shut. I remember standing there, staring terror-stricken at him, wondering if I should take long to die, if Jim——

But the mere thought of Jim nerved me to a fresh effort. Could I not hazard a wild leap over the monster's back—a step



backwards, a steady take-off, the mud permitting? What was the use of all my training, my golf, my tennis, if now, in this desperate hour of need, I could not leap for my life?

I drew back to make the attempt, feeling hopelessly the while that the mud would prevent a fair start; that the creature, snapping at my clothes, would pull me down—when, just as I had nerved myself to try, it slowly sank down beneath the water and disappeared!

A moment later, and, more dead than alive, I had staggered up the steps, pursued by a horrible sound of disturbed water and snapping jaws. There was a sort of path of clear, dry, sun-baked ground; beyond, a stone seat. I just reached it, and then Nature revenged herself for the prolonged tension, and I fainted. When I came to myself, the moonlight was struggling with the dawn. I still lay upon the seat, but my head was



pillowed on something soft, and over me bent—my husband!

‘Thank God!’ I heard his voice. It was no dream, then.

‘Jim! Back all right?’

My eyes spoke what my voice had not strength to utter.

‘Hush! My darling! Drink this. Now, let me carry you——’

‘Not back to *that* room!’ I gasped, shudderingly, clinging to him.

‘No, no, my darling. Lie quiet. Do not talk. I’ll take you to our own little Pearl Garden House.’

And there he laid me. It was all clear and fair now—scented with roses, and full of ring-doves, too, cooing. Then a fit of hysterical tears relieved my overstrained nerves, and I sobbed myself to sleep, holding Jim’s hand.

When I awoke it was high noon in the world outside. I felt myself once more, and was able to hear Jim’s story. He was



dreadfully penitent. Only to look at him, my Jim, with the iron nerves, who had faced charging tigers and mad elephants, you could see that he had had almost as great a fright as myself.

As for himself, this was what had occurred: Mohun, slipping down a ravine, had cut an artery in his leg with his hunting-knife, and wrenched his ankle badly.

‘I felt I could not leave him there alone to bleed to death. I wish I had, now,’ muttered Jim.

‘Jim!’

‘If I had known, my own—fifty Mohuns—but never mind that now! Well, I tied him up, and waited till all the danger was over. It was quite dark by then; the stalk had been such a long one.’

‘You got a fine head?’

‘Yes—no. I really can’t remember. The deer—I’ve forgotten all about it!’

‘You? Oh, Jim! And what next?’



‘Well, you see, Mohun couldn’t move, and I had to go off and get help to carry him. The nearest village was a couple of miles off, and I kept losing my way among the hills, and all the time I was worried to pieces wondering what you would think, how anxious you’d be.’

‘Not many sahibs would have taken all that trouble for a “nigger,” Jim,’ I murmured, proudly.

‘It was nothing, but for *you*! Besides, I owe Mohun something always for that time in Kashmir. However, I got him back all right in time. But I returned to find the Garden House empty! Then they sent me to the *Bebi-Khana*. There I found Ali Boxus and the ayah off their heads with terror. Your bed in the inner room was empty—you had utterly disappeared!’

‘My poor Jim!’

‘We hunted all over the palace,’ he continued, ‘and, of course, in vain! Then



—then suddenly—I remembered—the—the muggers !’

He stopped abruptly, grew pale beneath his tan, and the hand holding mine shook.

‘ We turned to the lake, and there I found you—wet—cold—I thought dead—but I *found* you !’

He could not go on. But I nestled my head upon his shoulder, and he, feeling me close to him, alive and warm, clasped me as if he could never let me go again, and thus, gradually, and in broken sentences, I told him the story of *my* night.

Ere we left ‘ Heart’s Delight ’ that evening—bringing, at my urgent pleading, our honeymoon to an abrupt conclusion, for nothing would have induced me to spend another night in the place—Jim inflicted summary vengeance. While men in punts beat the lake, he from the bank shot every bottle-nosed or man-eating mugger as soon as it showed its hideous snout above water.



The hide of the largest, a hideous monster, the patriarch of all the evil tribe, he wished to preserve as a trophy, and, at its skinning, two strange things came to light. In its stomach were found a silver amulet of native manufacture, and a gold ring, evidently English. The stones had dropped out, but on rubbing it up we were enabled to read the inscription inside:—

*‘Ethel Clayton from Jack Joyce. Till death do us part.’*

‘Ethel Clayton!’ I exclaimed. ‘Why, that was the name of mamma’s poor sister! Jack Joyce! Why, surely that was the name of the man she was engaged to—he was killed at the forlorn hope at Delhi—volunteered for it, mamma said, he was so broken-hearted about her death——’

‘Her death?’ repeated Jim. ‘But this ring?’



‘Poor Aunt Ethel! She was killed in the massacre at Guramghur, you know, when the treacherous old Maharajah——’

I stopped short, a horrible light breaking in upon me as I stared at the ring, and the mad jabberings of the old crone in the night burst into my mind again.

‘Unless—unless—oh! Jim, you don’t think—it can’t be possible?’—and I covered my face with my hands as if to shut out some horrible sight.

Whether our terrible surmise was true we were never able to discover. Jim made every investigation, but in vain. With the wicked old Maharajah had vanished all his myrmidons and the old *régime*. Either through ignorance or fear, not a soul about the place could or would say anything about any white woman brought to the palace forty years before, after the terrible massacre at Guramghur.



Only one person, they all agreed, could have told us anything about it: that was the late Maharajah's favourite wife—now a haggard old crone, with failing wits—through the kindness of his successor allowed to end her days at 'Heart's Delight.'

But she had not been seen since last evening. Only the amulet found inside the mugger, and which was at once identified as hers, corroborated the mad laugh and the falling figure which had followed me as I fell, and left us in no doubt as to her fate.

For my part, when I recall her frenzied words, and recollect that mamma has often told me how like I am to poor Aunt Ethel, I see plainly that my sudden appearance at 'Heart's Delight' must have aroused in the miserable maniac's distraught mind a fit of the jealousy of forty years back, and feel no doubt that somehow or other



(how, we shall never know this side of the grave) my poor young aunt fell a victim to the awful death I so narrowly escaped.



## A TALE OF A TROOP-SHIP.

NATURE had intended him for a troubadour, or for the poet who does the verses on the Christmas cards ; but circumstances had made him an officer in the Royal Navy.

He was cursed with a susceptible heart and a glib pen. Furthermore, cruel fate, after condemning him to a long spell in a gun-boat on the west coast of Africa, with ne'er a petticoat to be seen, posted him to H.M. Indian troop-ship *Alligator*. Here an ever-varying kaleidoscope of bewitching occupants of the ladies' cabin, changing every trip, and sandwiched in between delicious ten days in port among ' Southsea



Islanders ' or ' Bombay Ducks,' utterly did for him.

Had there been a severe strain of arduous duty on board a troop-ship, the service might have suffered somewhat in this gallant officer. But, as it was, there was only too much leisure in the which he could fall a prey to the charmers with whom he was shut up for a month in this floating prison. His shipmates trembled for his delicately balanced mind and prophesied a lunatic asylum or Salt Lake City. His cabin got so heaped up with useless gear, bestowed by way of souvenirs, that his servant experienced a difficulty in stowing him away at night.

The Crimson Cuirassiers were homeward bound in the *Alligator*, and their commanding officer was down with fever, liver, or something equally convenient. Otherwise his little daughter Ethel would not have been so entirely free to enslave the susceptible third lieutenant.



Miss Ethel Smith had not spent a year or two under a tropical sun, whether at select Simla, mixed Massoorie, or naughty Nynee, for naught. She had, on the contrary, made the most of her time, and was a past mistress in the noble art of flirtation. She made short work of our hero. Such, indeed, was the state of idiocy to which she reduced him, that one night, after he was unearthed from the snug corner of the star-light deck which he was wont, after dinner, to monopolize with the fair Ethel, to join the daily whist-party with the doctor, the paymaster, and the chaplain, they played the rubber gaily through without discovering that some facetious Cuirassier subaltern had removed all the tens from the pack!

The naval element was a delightful change to Miss Ethel, a-weary of heavy cavalry, and all went well till one day when the colonel recovered his health and lost his temper. He sniffed and snorted



and insisted upon occupying the aforesaid corner under the stars—and there was not room for three.

The hapless sailor-officer was crushed as flat as a pan-cake. They got well into the Bay of Biscay, which quite maintained its usual character, and Ethel got ill, and was invisible. Life became an aching void for poor Moth, R.N., which three square meals a day, not including tea, and with no exercise in between but deck-quoits, failed to fill.

Portsmouth jetty loomed in sight. Behind it lay busy populous England. The fast friends of the last month must part, never, perhaps, to meet again. Moth bade his Circe adieu, and *faute de mieux* bestowed endearments upon her asthmatic pug when the colonel was not looking.

Then he fled to the seclusion of his cabin, and burnt a perfect holocaust of quondam treasures to her memory in his wash-hand basin—strictly against orders to make



a fire in your cabin. Finally, he sought to drown his woes in the bottle—of ink.

He wrote, and he wrote. To such an alarming extent, that Ethel, staying in town with his twin sister Mrs. Blazeley, having read as many as she could conveniently digest, filled up the spare room drawers with the budgets. There was no stopping him. Things reached a climax, and the colonel's eyes were opened to what was going on, when, one morning, the postman staggered into the hall, under the burden of a bulky package which would not go into the letter-box.

Colonel Smith, having waylaid the postman, and perused with much edification the voluminous effusion, called to his assistance his elder twin daughter, Maude. Mrs. Blazeley was so ridiculously like Ethel, that when Major Blazeley proposed for the former, he very nearly asked the colonel if they were to go singly, or as a pair. Father and daughter concocted a



plan for putting a stop to all this waste of good writing-paper. They arranged for Ethel to spend the day at Beckenham with her aunt, and poor Moth might have been seen gloating over the following, as welcome a little note as the letter-corporal ever brought on board the *Alligator* :

‘ Papa is going down to Aldershot to-morrow. If you *should*, by any *chance*, happen to be in town that afternoon, and have nothing better to do, you might look in to tea.’

Of course he had nothing better to do than to tear up to town, and present himself at the appointed hour, in all the glory of a new tall hat and umbrella.

The object of his worship received him in an inner sanctum, separated from the drawing-room by the heavy folds of a *portière*. An artistic lace blind half concealed a prospect of leads, and shaded lamps cast a rosy glow about the twilight room. She was looking, he thought, even



more divine than ever. London had already restored some of the roses which India washes out.

The third lieutenant of the *Alligator* let himself sink enraptured on the sofa by her side. The colonel was safe at Aldershot. Here there were no myriad prying eyes as on board ship. Before he had sat there three minutes he had decided within himself that the corner on the starlit deck was not in it. Another three, and his arm was round her waist, his hand clasping hers, while he gurgled idiotically,

‘Just one. You *might* give me just one, when I’ve loved you so all this time, you know!’

She smiled sweetly at him.

‘Just one? Well—I don’t know—better ask my husband!’

‘Yes, you *had* better ask me!’ roared an angry echo from behind the *portière*.

The curtains parted as with a whirlwind, and the irascible apparition of



Major Blazeley stood in the opening. The gallant sailor's head whirled, and he retreated precipitately from the snug sofa.

Almost before he had time to collect his scattered senses, enter another dynamic vision in the shape of the colonel himself, crimson in the face, and spluttering very strong expletives.

'Ask her husband? I should think so, you young scoundrel! What do you mean by it? Just you clear out of this in double quick time, or I'll—I'll kick you downstairs!'

How poor mangled Moth got out into the street he never knew. But he did, somehow, though he left his new hat and umbrella in the hall.

The next morning the disagreeable old paymaster got a long letter from Colonel Smith, the contents of which appeared to afford him such intense joy that he imparted them to a few of his shipmates.



The result was that the unhappy Moth was nearly chaffed out of his shattered existence, and ended in applying to be sent back to the West Coast again, where he is known as an inveterate woman-hater.



## REVENGE IS SWEET.

## I.

It was the eve of the Crimean War. The night was in June, warm and still, not long before that momentous twenty-eighth, when, as Kinglake relates, the cabinet nodded over the reading of that dispatch which ordered the declaration of war with Russia.

A girl and a man stood very close together in a dim-lighted balcony. From the street below came a champing chorus of horses tossing their bits, mingled at intervals with the linkman's cry and the rolling away of a carriage. From the brilliant ball-room within floated strains of



dance music—not waltzes as we understand them now, weird and gloomy, with whole German sentences or English monosyllables for titles, with grumbling accompaniments in the bass and no time in particular in the treble. The waltzes of those days were simple, joyous things, easy to be understood of the common people, with plenty of music in them of a light kind, and such ingenuous titles as ‘The Power of Love;’ and the young people of the day danced to them with a will—rapidly, and giddily, and smoothly—like so many teetotums.

But the pair in the balcony neither danced nor talked. She was a beautiful girl, despite the disguise of the hideous fashions of the day. Her gold-brown hair, parted in the middle and waved demurely down either side of her forehead, was then turned back in such a way as entirely to hide her charmingly-shaped ears, and gathered into a knot low on her neck. Her



figure was tall and graceful; but it was cut in half, as it were, by a long-pointed bodice, and hooped round by the three deep, full flounces which composed the skirt. Her bodice was cut so low off her beautiful neck that she kept involuntarily hitching her shoulder to keep it on, and the hard, straight line it formed quite spoilt the artistic contours of her neck and bust. She stood leaning back against the balustrade, looking down, her head drooping over the fan with which she toyed, and the other hand, which lay on the top of the balustrade, was twitching nervously at the round, stiff bouquet she had laid there.

Her companion's appearance denoted at once the profession to which he belonged. In those days no one but stage brigands, Italian organ-grinders, and cavalry officers, wore what they termed 'moustachios.' What species of soldier except a 'plunger,' as he was proud to be called, would have



worn above the huge bow of his white tie those sweeping whiskers, that drooping, curly moustache he so lovingly fingered? And the girl's eyes across the top of her fan, deep blue eyes with a world of expression in them, rested wistfully on his manly figure and handsome face.

But they were silent both, and both nervous, he, too, fidgetting with whisker and moustache. From the square below came up to them the rumble of the London summer night, and then the waltz ended, not suddenly or indefinitely after two or three attempts to begin again as it were, or with a dying away into nothingness. No, there was a brisk, unmistakable firework of cheerful major chords, and then with an expression almost of relief he turned and proffered his arm.

'Lady Laura, may I take you down to have some refreshments?'

She wanted his heart, and he had offered her—an ice!



That night, or rather morning, when Lady Laura laid her pretty head upon her pillow, her face was suffused with a passion of bitter tears, and her little white hands clenched in a rage.

‘Gone—gone to the East. He told me that the “Crimsons” were under orders, and he has never said a word—a word! After all these dances—these bouquets—the nonsense he has talked—the way he has looked into my eyes. Oh! he’s been playing with me all the season—playing with me; he means nothing after all! Cruel, heartless! I hate him! I hate him! And now he’s going to the war, and he’ll get killed, and I’ll never see him again, never! I wish I were dead, I do! Playing with me, when they all tell me Lord Ecclesburn would propose to-morrow if I let him. Well, he may if he likes. But I shall never, never care for anyone but Fred, and *he’s* been playing with me!’



and she melted into the bitter, bitter tears of youth's first grief.

The Crimson Cuirassiers went out to the Crimea, and thence, in a hurry, they were despatched on to India, where the Mutiny was all ablaze. There the long-whiskered carpet-knight from Hounslow had ample opportunity for showing the stuff he was made of. Unshaven, ragged, begrimed, weary with the heat and the dust and the toil, Cornet Fred Hillersden led his men through the long, dreary months when the British army was dealing retribution for the massacre of Englishwomen and children all over the plains of India. His London friends would no longer have known him had they met him.

But he emerged alive from a bloody skirmish on the banks of the Goomtee, where Havelock was cutting his way to relieve Lucknow, and emerged a captain.



That evening for the first time he set eyes on his future wife—a fair-haired English girl, white and wan from that awful imprisonment in the Residency, where her parents and her brothers had perished. Six months later, when the land had peace, they met again among the ilex and rhododendrons of a Himalayan hill-station, and there they were married.

Lady Laura saw the announcement of the marriage in the *Times*, as she sat in the oriel window of an historic country house. She gazed out across a finely-timbered park, at where a group of sportsmen were wending their way towards the coverts across the browning fern. Among these sportsmen was the Earl of Ecclesburn.

That evening after dinner, when the young people of the party were all engaged over a round game of cards in the white drawing-room, Lady Laura allowed Lord Ecclesburn to turn over the leaves for her as she sat and sang to her harp in the



music-room beyond. The strains of her sweet voice were wafted into the card-players. She was singing 'Kathleen Mavourneen,' then the last new song, and she followed it up with 'Robin Adair.' There was an infinite pathos in her voice, and she sang with her soul; but it was of Fred Hillersden she thought as she sang.

Nevertheless, in the hush which followed the song, she allowed Lord Ecclesburn, then and there, in the dim quiet of the music-room, to propose again, for the second time—and she accepted him.

It was the old story. 'Her father did fret, and her mother did fume.' Pretty younger sisters, treading on her heels, upbraided her for standing so long in their way. Brothers, each in their own particular line, clamoured for the interest and patronage that the great nobleman they desired for their brother-in-law would have to bestow.



In the end there was a grand wedding at St. George's, Hanover Square. Royalty sent an Indian shawl, and Lady Laura became the Countess of Ecclesburn.

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## II.

MORE than thirty years later. The scene is one of the loveliest of the Himalayan hill-stations in the month of May. The precipitous hill-sides are green with ilex and deodar, and dyed here and there with crimson rhododendrons. On every side trim chalets peep out from among the trees, and the tall church spire rises to heaven, from a sharp ridge, whence one can get a panorama of the mighty snow-line, stretching away into Thibet. The place is very full. Soldiers and civilians, ladies and children, everyone who can get away from the fierce heat hanging like a pall over the plains below, has fled to



their mountain Capua, and dances, picnics, and sports are the order of each and every day.

In the shady verandah of one of the principal bungalows two people were sitting during the noonday heat. Sharp from the daintily-gardened terrace the mountain descended so sheer that the pines scarcely had a foothold, hundreds of feet down to a green valley, beyond which, through gaps in the lower hills, one caught a glimpse of the plains shimmering in the heat below. But the Virginian-creeper-covered verandah was shady and pleasant enough to rest in. Yet Lily Hillersden seemed restless.

At last she flung down a novel and went and seated herself at the end of a long cane chair, in which her father sat smoking and perusing some official papers which lay on a table at his elbow.

But no sooner had his daughter appeared than he instantly put them aside,



and turned to her with the air of one accustomed to obey her slightest wish. He passed his hand lovingly over her pretty fair head. To do it he had to put aside those official papers, for Major-General Sir Frederick Hillersden had but one arm; the other he had lost in the Mutiny.

Grizzled, tanned, and maimed, he had been steadily mounting the military ladder, having had the luck to find himself always in the right place at the right moment when we were involved in one of our many little wars, and now his time in command of one of our divisions was nearly up, and he began to think of retiring upon his laurels.

‘Well, my pet, and what’s the matter?’

‘Nothing, daddy,’ evasively.

‘Tut! Tut! Do you think I can’t see! I’ve got two eyes, though I’ve only got one arm!’

And he pulled her ear playfully. She



was the apple of his eye, the one thing in the wide world he valued, now that the wife of his youth slept within the four mud walls of an Indian cemetery.

‘A crumpled rose-leaf, eh? Don’t shake your head! I don’t like my little darling’s having even a crumpled rose-leaf! Hallo! Who’s that?’

The smart figure of a young man on a polo pony, which came up the narrow path up the hill-side at a hand-canter, and pulled up with a jerk on the terrace, caused Lily to spring up from her father’s chair.

‘Only Captain Dunholme!’

‘Sahib gives salaam,’ said the old bearer, shambling up to them from his position on the verandah steps at calling hours. ‘He cannot come in. He wishes to speak to the Missy Sahib.’

Lily hesitated, reddened, and then, as it were, reluctantly and slowly, went down the steps and met Captain Dunholme,



holding his pony under the shadow of the ilex.

‘I can’t come in, I haven’t a moment,’ began the smartest of the Viceroy’s A.D.C.’s. ‘His Ex. want’s me at twelve, and I have to play polo this afternoon afterwards. But I couldn’t rest—I wanted to hear from yourself—about this cotillon at the club dance to-night. Are you going to give it me, or not?’

He spoke peremptorily, almost angrily. There was more in his eyes than his words said.

The girl grew red again, and, tearing off a rosebud from the border, picked it to pieces nervously.

‘I tell you—I told you—I’ve promised it to Mr. Blackmannan.’

‘A bouncer of a globe-trotter, worth millions out of cotton, who gives delightful picnics and splendid birthday presents.’

He was really angry now, and the girl looked almost frightened as she glanced



up at his handsome face and eyes flashing down upon her.

Then she drew herself up with some pride.

‘I don’t understand you, Captain Dunholme. I dance the cotillon with whom I choose, just as you ask who you choose to play in the tennis tournament—and lose,’ she added, with a curl of her lip.

‘Oh! come,’ he interrupted, somewhat mollified, and climbing down. ‘You don’t really think I think anything of Miss Devereux—beyond her back-handers?’

But Lily had turned away, and was ascending the steps.

‘I’m afraid I must go in. Papa has to lunch early,’ she said, without turning her head.

‘You are coming down to see the polo this afternoon?’ he called after her.

‘I don’t know!’

And with that he had to be content and ride off, not a whit happier than when he



came, and leaving Lily in spirits scarcely improved.

They played polo down in the little green valley just below Sir Frederic Hillersden's house, and all Simree went and looked on, and Lily with them. A circle of jinrickshaws, dandies, jampans, and riders surrounded the field in which was to be contended a fierce match between the Viceroy's staff and a redoubtable team from the plains. Captain Dunholme was the best player on the ground, and all eyes watched him on his wiry little grey, twisting and turning, and scampering after the ball, amid a cloud of dust arising from the parched brown grass.

It was a good game, and time was nearly up, and the decisive goal still hung in the balance, when all of a sudden, when the riders were collected together struggling for the ball, there was seen to be a collision, and one of them was knocked down under his pony.



It was Reggie Dunholme, and they picked him up for dead, and, because it was nearest, carried him up the hill-side to Sir Frederic Hillersden's bungalow, where the latter's daughter Lily, her over-taxed nerves giving way, went into a fit of hysterics.

Reggie Dunholme did not die. He was only badly stunned, and he lay a week in the Hillersden's bungalow, recovering. By the end of that time he and Lily had an explanation.

It was one evening after a very hot day. Sir Frederic had gone to a big official dinner, and the intimate friend that Lily had invited to do gooseberry was very busy at the piano in the drawing-room playing all sorts of difficult music, which completely absorbed her attention.

Captain Dunholme had appropriated Sir Frederic's long cane chair in the verandah, being still somewhat of an interesting invalid, and lay there smoking. Presently Lily appeared with a cup of coffee.



She lingered a moment by his side, the brilliant moonlight which flooded the verandah lighting up her slim young figure in its white frock, and glinting her fair hair and neck.

‘Don’t go away,’ remarked Captain Dunholme, throwing away the end of his cigar and raising himself on his elbow; ‘you have no idea what a picture you make in the moonlight there.’

‘You make me quite shy;’ and she shifted back into the shadow, but closer to his chair.

‘Ah! that’s better still!’

‘If you pay silly compliments I shall go in to Ethel.’

‘Ethel—Miss Marsh—does not want you, and I——’

‘Shall I fetch you another cup of coffee?’

‘You’ve spoilt me dreadfully waiting on me like this. I don’t think I shall ever get over it.’



‘I’m not sure that it has been very good for you!’ scrutinising him with a roguish eye.

‘Good for me? Ah! you don’t know how good! Why, Li—Miss Hillersden—it’s made a different man of me—made me happier than ever I——’

‘Don’t fidget about so, Captain Dunholme,’ demurely. ‘Do lie still, or I’m sure you’ll make your head ache again.’

‘You’re very hard upon a fellow! Why won’t you understand me?’

‘See, you’ve knocked that pillow down! Are you not comfortable? Do you want another pillow?’

With a quick snatch, before she could prevent him, he had caught at her hand and drawn her down on the chair beside him.

‘I want *you*, Lily. You know that—you’ve known it a long time. Confess, and say you don’t mind, eh?’



What followed was lost amid the coruscating firework of closing chords with which Miss Marsh finished her piece, and when she came out into the verandah a moment later, she found as happy a pair as could be discovered in all Smiree that evening.

But their happiness cost Sir Frederic some of the bitterest grief he had ever known. How he could bring himself to go against his darling child's wishes can hardly be imagined. But Sir Frederic had had his eye on Reggy Dunholme for some time, and he knew too much about him. It was not that he had no money, was but the younger son of an impecunious Irish peer, and lived far beyond his allowance and his pay. He had found out that Master Reggy could not keep his hands off cards when they were going, and that he had an unconquerable mania for betting. No wonder the father hesitated to intrust



his Lily's happiness into Dunholme's hands.

There was a terrible scene with her, of course. The pair, despite sundry lovers' quarrels, were desperately in love with each other, and Lily's tears, persuasions, coaxing, almost tore her father's heart to pieces.

In the end a sort of compromise was arrived at. Sir Frederic agreed to allow a kind of half-and-half engagement for nearly a year. But there was to be no meeting and no corresponding. If at the end of that time Reggy had turned over a new leaf, and burnt his betting-book, so to speak, and Lord Dunholme was willing to make some settlements, then they might be married.

With this they had to be content, and part. For Reggy, what with worry and his polo-smash, had a nasty go of sharp fever, and the doctor peremptorily ordered



him home to England, to get out of the reach of the hot weather.

There was a dreadful saying good-bye, a thousand promises of fidelity, and on Reggy's part of such exemplary conduct in the future, that when they met again in the autumn in England, Sir Frederic's hard heart should be softened, and his consent to the marriage secured.

Then Reggie rode away down the hill-side, his face set for the sea and home, and I am not sure but what Sir Frederic, as he tried to dry Lily's tears, was not the most miserable of the three.

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### III.

To return to Laura, Lady Ecclesburn. That marriage had seemed to turn out excellently well for everybody—except the husband. Lady Ecclesburn became



one of the most brilliant ornaments of London society, and her family—her brothers and her sisters—prospered exceedingly. But, after a few years, Ecclesburn was more abroad than in England, busy shooting big game or catching salmon. It would have been hard to find a more semi-attached and uncongenial couple. Whispers began to float about that Ecclesburn drank and Lady Ecclesburn painted. He died when yet barely middle-aged, and his distant cousin and successor, a shining light of the Free Kirk, metaphorically gathered up the skirts of his garments, and passed Laura, Lady Ecclesburn, by on the other side. The countess found the court of the Second Empire at the Tuilleries more to her taste than that of St. James.

But this is a roomy world. She still kept her niche in a certain section of society who forgive a dowager countess



much, and, after all, provided the race-course and the card-table were open to her, Laura, Lady Ecclesburn, cared little what drawing-rooms were closed.

She waned into middle age. From a thing of beauty she became an object of art—the base material upon which the dressmaker and the *coiffeur*, the staymaker and the enamelist, worked their wicked wills. New York made much of her, and men ran down to her villa at Monte Carlo, and her house at Newmarket, and, somehow, forgot to bring their wives.

So time rolled on. Her old friends ‘went under,’ married, or died. Their places were taken by younger men, for as Laura, Lady Ecclesburn, turned the corner of her half-century, she began to take up boys, naughty, but nice-looking, boys, who admired her as warmly as their fathers had done at their age.

It was at Sandown, at the Eclipse Stakes, that the world first saw Reggie



Dunholme in Lady Ecclesburn's train. He had only just returned home, full of good resolutions to give up betting and win Lily, when an evil Fate put him next to the dowager countess at a supper party at the Bachelors' Club, and she persuaded him, being much smitten with his good looks and charming manners, to go down on a coach with her to the races next day. Once there, Reggie was, of course, in his element, but was careful, and did not bet high.

Lady Ecclesburn had now taken him up, and became quite devoted to him. He, on his part, found it amusing to go about with her, and she was very good company. So he was by no means unwilling to join her party to the baths of Stinkabad, which the doctors had said would be good for him after his Indian fever. Besides, Reggie had spent a great deal of money during his season in London, and had had some unlucky race meetings, and was



nothing loth to accept an invitation to stay at her villa. After Stinkabad, where there was a good deal of baccarat in the *Cercle Privé* in the evenings, and poker in Lady Ecclesburn's villa on wet afternoons, she offered him a cruise in her yacht.

They were a small party on board the *Débonnaire*, but a singularly well-assorted one, admirably illustrating the proverb which lays down the affinity which fowls, especially those of a somewhat ruffled plumage, have for each other. The hostess contrived to monopolise Reggie Dunholme. The latter, ever ready to take such good things as the gods provided, let her have her way.

Not that in his heart of hearts he had forgotten Lily. He would not have willingly embarked in a flirtation with any girl; but Lady Ecclesburn—why, she was old enough to be his mother! Then Lily was far away, and the time of probation



seemed long. She would never know, and, if she did, she could not possibly mind; if she only saw Lady Ecclesburn, how could she be jealous?

The *Débonnaire* steamed into Dartmouth Harbour and took up her position among the long line of yachts in the grand old estuary under the rocky hills for Dartmouth Regatta. In the evening the party went ashore to the fair in the New Ground, where Lady Ecclesburn might have been seen whirling round with Reggie on the wooden steeds of the merry-go-round.

Then they rowed back to the yacht alone, and sat enjoying a quiet cigarette on deck. A young moon shone out over the old church of St. Petrox, standing sentry on the rocky promontory at the harbour mouth. The yacht's lights were reflected in the ripple of the running tide. From the shore, softened by the distance, came the sound of the merry-go-round



steam organ. Reggie sprawled in a huge basket-chair, looking very handsome in his yachting-cap, and his hostess gazed at him tenderly.

A yawn, a stretch, and the loose cuff of his dinner-jacket fell back, and revealed to Lady Ecclesburn's eyes a gold bangle, firmly soldered on to his wrist.

'Why, what's this, Reggy?' she asked, taking his hand and examining the wrist. 'I didn't know that you went in for jewellery.'

She was exactly double his age. Even in that light she looked made-up, and he half shrank from her touch. But her hand lingered on his arm tenderly.

'Indian gold, surely! The dog-collar you wore when you were a *bow-wow* in the hills, eh?'

'Never was a *bow-wow*,' he muttered, embarrassed, and the colour deepened under his tan.



‘It’s a *gage d’amour*, I bet. Reggie, I insist upon knowing.’

She murmured the words in his ear, her head bent close to his. She looked at him with those eyes, those wonderful eyes of hers, which, alone of all her features, had not lost their beauty.

A half shudder passed over Reggie. He rose quickly from his chair, and walked to the side of the ship.

‘It was given me by—by the girl I’m—I’m engaged to!’ he muttered, looking away from her, and puffing a cloud of smoke out on the water.

Lady Ecclesburn came and stood by his side.

‘The girl you’re engaged to! Who’s she?’

‘The general’s daughter at Lucknow—Lily Hillersden.’

It was Lady Ecclesburn’s turn to look away now, and, as she gazed down into



the dark depths of the waters, she seemed to hear, through the mist of years, the strains of an old-world waltz, and a voice which thrilled her through and through, though it only asked,

‘ Will you take an ice, Lady Laura ? ’

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IV.

OLD Lord Dunholme, very hard-up on account of the agricultural depression, had been by no means pleased with his son Reggie, since the latter's return to England, owing to his repeated demands upon the paternal exchequer. When, therefore, Reggie lost heavily at Goodwood, where he went with Lady Ecclesburn's party, the old man was intensely incensed, and swore that he neither would, nor could, pay another penny. Reggie began to find himself somewhat in a hole, as he put it.



But when he confided his woes to Lady Ecclesburn the latter was somewhat consolatory.

‘Come down and stay with me at Thirlstane for the “Leger” and get square again. I’ve got a first-rate thing on for the Cup, and a nice party together, and am going to have a special to Doncaster.’

Thirlstane Hall was a small but beautiful old place belonging to the Ecclesburns, which had been settled upon the dowager countess for life, much to the disgust of the present peer, to whom she was a perpetual thorn in the flesh. Thither Reggie, the toils fast closing round him, allowed himself to be carried off, and thither, too, his ill-luck pursued him. In vain Lady Ecclesburn, who was supposed always to have straight tips, gave him good advice. Her ‘good things’ did not come off, and poor Reggie went an ‘awful mucker,’ as he said himself. Ruin stared him in the face.



He sat moodily puffing away at a cigar in the billiard-room at Thirlstane the Sunday evening after the 'Leger.' The rest of the house-party had dispersed, but poor Reggie did not really know what to be at or where to go. Face his father at Dunholme he dare not. London, with his duns and settling day, was equally out of the question.

His hostess, a cigarette between her well-carmined lips, watched him for a few moments over the top of the last night's newspaper. Then she turned back to a paragraph which had already caught her attention :

'Sir Frederick Hillersden, late general commanding the Lucknow division in India, whose appointment expired last month, is expected to arrive in town from Brindisi next week, accompanied by his daughter.'

Lady Ecclesburn knew that, if she meant



to act, there was no time to be lost.

‘Reggie! You look fit to hang yourself!’

‘So I am! I can’t, for the very life of me, see daylight anywhere! The dear old regiment—I must chuck it, of course—and everything—everybody,’—(he meant Lily).

‘A wretched devil of a younger son—I wish I’d never been born!’

Lady Ecclesburn stole across to him, and, leaning on the back of his chair, whispered something in his ear.

A few minutes later a footman, who happened to come in with the bed-room candles, was surprised to see Captain Dunholme, who was never known to drink, standing white as a sheet by the tray on the side table in the act of pouring down a glass of raw whisky.

When Sir Frederic Hillersden set foot once more upon his native soil one morning shortly afterwards, and bought a *Morning Twaddler* at the Dover bookstall, almost



the first thing that met his eye was the following announcement in the 'Fashionable Intelligence :'

'MARRIAGE IN HIGH LIFE.

'On Friday morning at St. Blankian's, South Highgate, Laura, Dowager Countess of Ecclesburn, was married quietly to the Honourable Reginald Dunholme, youngest son of Lord Dunholme, of Knowrent Castle, Ballyboy cott. The bride, who is the widow of the late Earl of Ecclesburn, has for the last quarter of century been well known in Parisian society, and is a familiar figure at Monte Carlo and at all the great race-meetings.'

To most women at Lady Ecclesburn's age come the sweet pleasures of grandson's successes and granddaughter's *debuts*. Not the less keen, however, was her triumph when she came across Sir



Frederic and his daughter at a party a few weeks later, and presented Reggie Dunholme to them as 'my husband!'



## A STORY OF THE STUBBLES.

‘SET ! to your love !’

And a tall slip of a school-girl, with an untidy rope of tawny hair hanging far below her waist, and a pair of glorious eyes like those of Titian’s Bella, flung up her tennis-racket triumphantly into the air, adding :

‘How could you let me beat you a love set, Bob ?’

Her opponent, a slim Woolwich cadet, passing out next term, came over to her side of the net, close up to her.

‘But you always do, Bee. Don’t you know that I am always “love” to you ?’



She held the racket *en garde* between them, and laughed through it.

‘Don’t be an idiot, Bob!’

Before the latter could reply, a harsh German voice rang across the tennis-ground.

‘Ladi Bee! Ladi Bee! ist not that tennis finished? It is good time that you come and practise!’

‘All right, Fraülein!’ shouted Bob, in audacious mimicry of Bee’s voice, to the invisible governess. Then he added:

‘One minute, Bee; do say good-bye. I’m going back to “the shop” to-morrow, and when I come home at Christmas you won’t be at the Castle—you never are in the winter—and next summer—well! I shall have got my commission, and may be in Timbuctoo.’

‘No such luck! you’re too much of a bad sixpence not to be turning up.’

‘Or in Egypt, Bee, getting killed. I say, Bee, do say good-bye to a fellow.’



‘Ladi Bee! Vat is dis? And why you still over dis already finished game stay?’

Fraülein herself loomed on the scene and dispersed both the good-bye that trembled on Bee’s lips, and Bob.

Three years later the whole scene came vividly back to him, as he sat in a stifling tent on torrid Egypt sands, pestered by a very plague of flies, and read in an old *World* how Lady Beatrice Penistone had been one of the most admired of the *débutantes* at the May Drawing-room; and notices of her presence, her frocks, and of how she looked, at many fashionable gatherings which were mere names to the country parson’s son, the penniless subaltern of artillery. Yet all the same there came to him with a thrill of pleasure the memory of that last game in the Castle gardens, accompanied by a vision of tawny hair and laughing eyes.

But, fair as the memory was, the reality fairly staggered him when, home again a



year later, someone pointed out to him, at a crowded Artillery ball, a regal-looking woman as Lady Beatrice Penistone, *the* beauty. But she was utterly oblivious of the presence of the boy-lover of her school-room days. She was surrounded, as usual, by a throng of admirers, and among them all Colonel Parkfield was first favourite.

For some weeks past Bee Penistone had been playing a dangerous game. She was no longer the fresh, innocent girl of Bob's dreams. A triumphant season in London had decidedly deteriorated her. Lovely as ever—in fact, improving as her beauty matured—she was developing fast into a thorough-paced flirt. Refusing several good offers to the despair of her mother, now—when the season was waning, when the world was talking of cricket at Lord's and yachting at Cowes, and when men were beginning, in the heat and glare of the pavements, to sigh for breezy moors—she carried on with Colonel Parkfield.



And people shook their heads, for he was a married man, with an invalid wife, and a character that would scarcely bear looking into. Bee Penistone had met her match, and that night, at the Gunners' ball, burnt her fingers.

It happened thus. Everyone who has been to the Artillery balls will remember the long library in the mess-house, divided into alcoves, intended probably to afford seclusion to the studious mind, but which, when the mess is turned upside down for a dance, each harbour two chairs wherein couples sit out.

How far Colonel Parkfield, in one of these nooks, overshot his mark, and what he said to Bee, she never revealed. But, anyhow, she rose up suddenly and left him there, and stalked down the long corridor all alone, to the amazement of the other occupants of the other alcoves, and with the pride of all the generations of past Penistones firing her queenly face and gait. At



the door she came face to face with Bob.

To his astonishment she seized his arm, as a drowning mariner seizes a plant.

‘Bob! take me away, quick!’

He had barely time to draw her aside into an ante-room ere she burst into a passion of mingled shame and rage.

Colonel Parkfield saw it all, and shot, as he passed by, a glance at Bob, which boded the latter no good.

Lady Bee got her parents to leave town early that year; she wanted rest, she said. Probably she found it at the Castle, for they had few house-parties, and Bob, at the Vicarage on leave, lived in a fool’s paradise of bliss.

But Colonel Parkfield was not the man to be easily repulsed. He wrote to Bee more than once, and got no answer. Still he was too much in love with her to relinquish the pursuit lightly. He made his friend Sir Holt Cranborough, the earl’s



neighbour, to ask him down in September to shoot the partridges.

The very first evening of his arrival, Parkfield took a country walk alone. He strolled across the Castle park, and, unseen, descried Bob rowing Lady Bee about on the lake in the Canadian canoe. Once again the expression of his face was not pleasant to look upon.

The Cranboroughs were good-natured old folks, rather behind the time in their social politics, and doubtless considered they were doing their vicar's son a good turn when they asked Bob to come up the second day of the shooting. Moreover, Lady Cranborough, who was very fond of Lady Bee, asked the latter to join her, and take the shooters lunch up to the Great Elm, at the top of the sixty acre field. That lunch hour was hardly a pleasant one to Colonel Parkfield, and he could scarcely hide his jealousy and mortification. But Bee and Bob were too much engrossed



with each other to notice it. The spoilt London beauty had vanished, and Bob had found again his school-girl love of old.

But after lunch truly indeed did the devil enter into Parkfield. The ladies, after trying a little walking with the guns, were deterred by a heavy wet patch of turnips, and took up a coign of vantage whence they could see the party shoot two likely pieces of stubble, divided by a thick hedge. As they got into line, Parkfield turned to the keeper.

‘If it’s all the same, I wish you’d put me on the inside and Mr. Carruthers at the end, keeper. I’m in such infernal bad form to-day, and as he’s shooting straight we shan’t lose so many birds.’

What was there in his eye, that, as Bee caught his glance, she turned to Bob, with a strange fear at her heart?

‘Good-bye for the present, Mr. Carruthers. We shall meet again at tea, Bob.’



The last word was spoken so low that it was only caught by him for whom it was intended, and—by Parkfield.

Of what took place almost immediately no one was ever able to give an accurate account. Some said that Parkfield's gun went off accidentally, as he and Bob Caruthers were getting through that said thick hedge; some said that the former was firing at a bird which had broken back. Be it as it may, a sharp cry of pain followed the discharge, and when Lady Bee came flying swiftly to the little group gathered under the hedge, she found Bob stretched on his back on the hard ground, his head resting helplessly on somebody's coat, and his eyes already glazed with approaching death. That was all she saw, for some one came and led her away.

Lady Bee had a bad illness, which lasted long after Bob was laid to his rest under the churchyard elms, hard by the vicarage wall, all his fighting days over. When



she recovered, her parents took her for a yachting cruise in the Mediterranean. It was there she saw in the paper that Mrs. Parkfield's long martyrdom had ended in death.

When Lady Bee began to go out the following season again, quiet and sobered, and 'so gone off' the women said, Colonel Parkfield threw the die.

Some chance had brought him and Lady Bee together at a dinner at the Imperial Institute. A little manœuvring enabled him to lose himself with her in the crowd round the band.

Then and there, in the dim light, amid the babble of the crowd, and the scrunching of the hundreds of footfalls on the gravel, incoherently, passionately, his pent-up feelings bursting forth almost beyond his control, did Parkfield plead his cause.

But he might have spoken to a statue. Lady Bee turned on him with all the scorn



and pride she had evinced that night at the Artillery ball. The words hissed from her like a snake :

‘How dare you speak to me, you—murderer !’



### PETTED BY A PANTHER.

THE following veracious history is intended as a solemn warning against the enormity so frequently practised in youth, and as commonly condemned in maturer years, of not getting up when you are called. With the axiom that early-rising folk are conceited up to twelve o'clock, and stupid afterwards, I have no sympathy whatever. A long residence in the shiny East, and many years of compulsory getting up in the small hours of the morning, has impressed upon me the truth about the early bird and its vermicular victim. In the ensuing story you will learn how



nearly the early worm caught the late bird.

The Lambkin and I were subalterns together in the Scilly Islanders. 'The Lambkin' was only his nickname, which shows how popular he was, for no one but a good fellow ever has a nickname. Had the Lambkin been a girl, I am positive his sphere in life would have been that of an old maid devoted to cats; for, from his first experience of India, it was leopards and panthers which seemed to fascinate him most among all the strange beasts, wild and tame, with which that land abounds.

His first introduction to him of the unchangeable spotted coat was, I recollect, at a hunt got up at Guramghur by a neighbouring rajah, for the delectation of some globe-trotting English magnate whom he delighted to honour. The hunting leopard does not belong to the cat, but to the dog tribe; it is a kind of connecting



link between the dog and the cat. But it has the dog foot, and not the receding claw of the cat, like the panther, ounce or snow-leopard, and hill-leopard, all of which are feline. Often in our evening rides near the native city we had met a pair of the rajah's hunting leopards out exercising, led each by two natives by a chain on either side, so that should he make a spring at one, the other keeper could drag him off. As we trotted to the *rendezvous* on the morning of the day appointed, we came up with a country cart, in which were seated the leopards, their backs to the bullocks which dragged it, like malefactors journeying to Tyburn. Each, like merlins in the days of falconry, was closely hooded over the eyes.

When we reached a wide, uncultivated plain beyond the city, over which roamed herds of antelope, we halted and scanned the horizon. Ere long we marked the herd, and the bullock-cart jolted on its



way towards them, over a rough dusty track. We riders kept at a respectful distance on the flank, lest we should scare the game, which, however, took no notice of an accustomed object like the bullock-cart. How graceful and pretty they looked, the spiral-horned black buck, and his graceful does, grazing peacefully among the low scrub, unsuspecting of the approaching danger.

The country cart almost passed the buck, who was half hidden by a bush, when the native within loosed and unhooded the cheetah.

‘Wahan! Dekko!’ (There! Look!) he whispered to him, pointing out the deer.

The leopard opened wide his blinking eyes, and sneaked down from the cart, watching the deer intently, and creeping slowly towards him, as you have seen pussy stalk a thrush upon the lawn. Taking advantage of every bush and



covert, and pausing to mark if the deer perceived him, the cheetah lessened every moment the distance between them. The instant the black buck raised his horned head and caught sight of the approaching enemy, a single leap, such as these antelopes can make, would have placed him out of reach of peril. But he seemed as if paralysed with fear, and doubtful which way to fly. In three springs the cheetah was upon him, and had struck him to the ground with his paw. The keeper now rushed up. But the leopard was as snarly and savage as a cat playing with a mouse. So the native whipped out his knife, and cutting the deer's throat, bled it into a saucer. The delighted cheetah relinquished his prey to lap greedily at the blood, and while so engaged was chained and hooded, and then led back to the cart. It was a sight to see, once in a way, but it hardly came up to an Englishman's idea of sport.

Our next meeting with a leopard was



of a domestic, not a sporting character ; and happened in this wise : The Lambkin and I were ordered from Guramghur up to a hill sanatorium on detachment duty. We journeyed thither first by rail, then by *dâk-gharry* (a kind of ramshackle bathing-machine on wheels drawn by galloping ponies), and at the foot of the Himalayas we mounted sturdy hill *tats*, and wound our way up the mountain sides. Half way up we rested at a wayside bungalow, for the road was long and hot. These lower, hot slopes of the Himalayas are the great haunts of leopards, which, in the jungle forests, feed on deer, monkeys, wild pigs, lizards, and birds. As we sat on a kind of rough lawn near the bungalow, refreshing ourselves in the shade with strawberries and cream about four o'clock in the afternoon, we saw emerge from the brushwood, at a distance of some hundred yards, a female leopard and three cubs. They sunned themselves



for some time on the rocks, the little ones gambolling like kittens.

‘You had better have an eye to your dog, sir,’ was our host’s parting word as we set out again on our upward ride. ‘If there are leopards about, he may get snapped up at dusk under your very nose!’

Poor Spot, the Lambkin’s white terrier, running gaily at his pony’s heels, so pleased to get in the cool, the words were prophetic of his fate! Not many days after, as we sat in the verandah of the mess bungalow at dusk, smoking, Spot ran out on to the rough terrace around. We only lost sight of him for a moment, then some one saw, or thought he saw, a dark object spring out of a bush, and we all heard a piteous yelp. But, though we hurried to the place, that was the last we ever saw or heard of poor Spot, except a little white paw found next morning in the jungle four hundred yards away.

After this, the Lambkin’s soul yearned



to slay a panther. One day we got an unexpected chance. We were out shooting small game in the hills with an army of beaters and three guns, and were all young and 'griffish' (*Anglicè* 'green.') Suddenly a leopard tried to break through the line of beaters, but was driven back and came out in the open. Fearfully excited though I was, I had the sense to restrain myself from firing at him with my gun; but the Irish doctor next to me, who was armed only with an old duck gun, blazed away at him with true Hibernian impetuosity, and peppered him. The Lambkin, however, who carried a rifle, killed him. There ensued forthwith a warm discussion as to whom the skin belonged by rights. The pertinacious doctor, however, claimed first blood, and carried off the trophy, and a fine, large, long skin it was, and ornamented his bungalow for many a day. A military outfitter would



have charged some twelve pounds for it, mounted as a saddle-cloth, but in India they can be got for a pound.

Later on we had still better fun with a leopard. A government reward of five rupees is offered for every one killed by the natives. They trap them in strong wooden palisades or cages, made of posts, and some seven feet long, and baited with a bleating kid encased at the far end ; or, sometimes, they set a gun-trap. This is very ingenious. The kid is tied up in a little arbour made of boughs, and the gun set at full cock in front. A piece of strong silk is fastened to the trigger, and to a peg at exactly the distance from which the leopard springs, so that when the gun goes off, it shoots him in the heart. This kind of trap is not invariably successful. I heard of one set in the hills which only wounded the beast, who crawled off desperately savage, got into a neighbouring



stable, and mauled and killed a pony and a cow, and was found dead a few days afterwards at some distance.

It was in a cage-trap, however, that the panther we hunted was caught. When released we rode him on horseback, armed with hog-spears, and it was not hard work, as he let the horses come close up to him. But it was a bit dangerous, and one Arab got badly scratched on the flank.

When the Lambkin had a real good time among the leopards, however, was when he got six months' leave, and departed for the happy hunting-grounds of Cashmere, and made the biggest bag I have ever heard of. But then the Lambkin had the digestion of an ostrich, no liver to speak of, and did not know what fever meant. So he had absolutely no objection to frequenting the low, hot valleys. When he got news of the whereabouts of a leopard, he collected a few of the parah puppies which abound in all native villages. Then he had construct-



ed a *machan* in a tree near the cheetah's haunt. This is a kind of rude platform where a man may sit or lie at ease. On the ground below he pegged down some of the puppies, who yelped for their mammas. When the cheetah came sneaking after them in the dusk, the Lambkin bagged him from above.

On one occasion, however, the Lambkin had the tables turned upon him, at the imminent risk of his life. He had, as he thought, shot a leopard, and descending from his *machan* began to search all round for the corpse, but without success. He explored all the neighbouring jungle, but in vain. Halting a moment to consider what on earth could have happened to his kill, he became aware of a slight rustling in the bushes behind him. He turned round, and lo and behold ! the stalker was being stalked. The Lambkin had barely time, ere Spots made his spring, to cock his rifle and put a stop to further proceedings.



By this time the Lambkin was getting to be a good shot, and to have a hunter's eyes. One evening, about five p.m., he was walking through the jungle. He had heard a leopard about in the night, making a gigantic purring through the forest, and frightening the little 'karkar' deer, who barked warningly to each other across the valley. Happening, as he walked along, to look straight ahead, at some distance he saw the head of a panther pop out on hearing him approach, between the forked branches of a great banyan-tree, where the animal was taking a siesta. The Lambkin shot him dead. On examining the tree he found it was evidently a favourite resort of the leopard, as the bark was scratched by his paws on one side, where he was in the habit of climbing up and down.

The Lambkin's culminating performance, however, was when, like the shepherd-lad of Scripture, he slew, so to speak, a lion and a bear. He was walking through the



jungle in pursuit of game, when he became aware of a great commotion near at hand, a cracking of branches, and the miau-miauing of a young bear. Peering stealthily through the trees, imagine his surprise at beholding a black bear, half-way up a deodar pine, and a leopard on the lower boughs, trying to climb after him. Making sure first of Spots, as the more difficult to kill, the Lambkin killed them both.

On that famous Cashmere trip, he secured no less than ten leopards in three months, and, moreover, brought back a young cub as a pet. It was a pretty thing, fawn-coloured with black rings, about the size of a cat. It subsisted on bread and milk, was devoted to its master, and grew apace.

The Lambkin and I shared a bungalow. Moreover, in view of a certain bad habit which beset us both, we had made a solemn league and covenant that neither would go off to early morning parade without first ascertaining that the other was awake and



ready. For old De Bootby, our colonel, was a frightful martinet about punctuality ; and further, there existed a quaint, time-honoured custom in the Scilly Islanders that, instead of having to send in your reasons in writing for being late for parade, you were put down for a magnum of champagne at mess. It was after everyone had imbibed dry Monopole for several nights at our expense that the Lambkin and I instituted the above league for mutual self-defence. And it was as well. For our bearers were almost worn out with trying to induce us to get up, and torn in sunder, poor wretches, between fear of the kicks and maledictions they received in the performance of their duty, and the explosion of wrath which subsequently descended on their devoted heads if they failed in their attempt.

One morning in the hot weather (it was only 3.30 a.m. and not light) we had to get up to early parade. I was ready



first, and was out in the verandah, about to mount my pony and gallop off to barracks, when I remembered the Lambkin. I walked round to his bed-room, and looked in through the rush mat which hung over the doorway. The Lambkin lay sleeping soundly on his little low camp bed in the middle of the large, bare, white-washed apartment, and by his side lay something big and tawny. I looked again. It was the pet panther. It seemed odd to me, and I went in. As I got close to the bed, the beast gave a low snarl, and my heart stood still with horror.

The leopard lay at full length licking the Lambkin's head just above the temple. What he had probably begun in an affectionate mood to awaken his sleeping master, he was now continuing with all the latent ferocity of his wild nature aroused, for he had licked the hair entirely off one side of the head, and the blood was slowly oozing through the skin.



The animal looked up at me with a snarl at being disturbed, and licked its lips like a cat stealing cream. For the first time it was tasting human blood. I had come just in time, and only just in time. It was with the utmost difficulty we aroused the Lambkin and got the panther off him. The whole nature of the beast seemed changed. He knew no one, and, retiring into a corner growling and snarling, had to be dispatched then and there with a rifle. But ever afterwards if the Lambkin had any difficulty in waking up, we had only to tell him to look out for the panther, and he sprang up with a start. He had had a lesson, and the panther story became a time-honoured regimental joke.

Poor old Lambkin! It was not many years after, however, that he fell a victim to as tragic a fate as that from which I had saved him, and which all who recognise him under his *sobriquet* will remember. As



the regiment was homeward bound on a troop-ship, we stopped for the night at Port Said, that hell upon earth, the resort of the scum of all nations. Some of us foolish young fellows went ashore after dinner for a lark, and the poor Lambkin in a row in a *café chantant* got mortally stabbed by a drunken Levantine.

THE END.







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